

117 /
Officium Cleri ,

Desiderium Populi :

OR,

Canonical Obedience

Asserted and Proved,

To be

The Duty of Gospel Ministers,

AND

The Desire of all good Hearers :

TOGETHER

With some short Reflections upon the

SIN and DANGER

OF

Simony and Sacrilege.

L O N D O N,

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THE PREFACE.

Giving an Account of the Design, Occasion and
Contents of the Ensuing Discourse.

THIS Discourse (as to substance) was at the first Preached, and well approved of, in an Auditory, where many of the Clergy were present, and to gratifie the desires of some Friends, Manuscripts were taken and sent; and now (to prevent mistakes and other considerations) I expose it to publick view.

I have freely and fully dedicated and devoted it to him, who knows the principle from which, the heart with which, and the end for which I send it abroad, and have earnestly besought him, to be its Patron, and to make it serviceable to his own glory, and the good of all into whose hands it may come, and under the shadow of his extensive and winged Providence, I leave it to shift for it self, as well as it can, assuredly concluding, that if he be for it, none can prevailingly be against it.

I have stript it of some Quotations, and Embroideries of Art and Language which at the first did accompany it, thinking such not so proper now, as then; I know there is a time (for such as are able) to speak Learnedly) and in some places, and upon some occasions, men may take a modest liberty to shew that they are men of learning and parts, but whatever is written (as this is) for the good of the whole, must be fitted to the capacities of all, else the design is lost.

I have chosen a middle way of writing, neither too high and splendid, to shew ostentation, and beget admiration; nor too low and sordid, to cause derestation and loathing; the mean between these extremes I thought would tend most to edification.

We find Solomon (so famous for Wisdom) seeking out acceptable words to set forth Truth in its most clear and lively colours: And we find St. Paul thanking God that he spake with more Tongues than all the false Prophets of his time, using great plainness of speech, and declaring that (in the Church) he had rather speak five words to the edification of
others,

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others, than ten thousand words in an unknown Tongue to cause admiration at his profound Learning; and it's no small blessing (to such as are sensible) to hear and read the most Learned Divines of our Israel treading in their steps, and even studiously stooping to deliver and defend the Truth to the understandings of the meanest capacities. But for all that, there is a way of Preaching and Writing which has a taste of the Times: I will express my meaning thus.

We see almost all our English Yeomanry run up into a new Gentry: the Son is more richly clad, than ever his Father was, hath a higher Title, a more stately House, and more Noble Attendance, than ever his Father had; he bears a greater figure, makes a greater shew, and in all outward appearance his splendor much excels the plainness of his Father. Yet it's commonly said (by such as knew both) the Father was the wiser man, and did more good to Church and Poor: Let us take heed lest the comparison prove not true between us and our Learned grave Predecessors. The Apparel of our Language doth somewhat excel theirs; our Style is higher, and Furniture more costly, yet let us keep the old Wisdom still, and labour to do as much good, and more, if possible, than they did.

It is true, the Ancient Romans, who once conquered the World, could now do but little if they were to enter the Stage again, with their old Weapons & Discipline; neither is it now possible for us to do the same good our famous Predecessors have done, in the same way; yet let us beware lest too much affectation of new ways, bring our Ministerial work to be more like an exercise of Art to catch Applause to our selves, than to plant Christianity in others, or more like an Artillery Exercise than a true Battel.

In an Artillery-yard, there are neat Arms, handsom Postures, the Volleys orderly discharged, and all with a braver shew, and more Art than in a true Battel; but there is no true level made at the Enemy, no Bullets flying, no Wounds given, nor Victory gotten. But this is not our work; we are Preachers of the Word, not of Words, and it is not enough for us to have comely parts, neat divisions, choice illustrations, quick and elegant expressions, or to discharge a Volley of words handsomly, but we must take level at the sins before us, and charge our mouths with Bullets; we must draw out the Sword of the Spirit, and do our best to wound, to kill, to conquer, and to take Prisoners for God; we are listed and sworn Souldiers, and it's Treason against Heaven if we do not our best.

As some Ministers may be found guilty in this, so the fault may in part be laid upon some hearers, their delicate and scornful Ears do exercise too great a Tyranny over their Tongues and Pens; their Discourses must

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must be attired with gawdy and gay Language, and filled with Witticisms, and fine flourishes, or they are no ways acceptable to their Ears or Eyes; and hence it comes to pass, that some Ministers having a desire to win them to a love of Piety, present them with a dish of Meat buried up with Flowers, so overspreading his matter with Eloquence and fine Expressions, that there is little to be found besides a sweet scent and pleasing Air of high-flown Language. As this may be a fault in Ministers, so the blame may be laid upon such hearers. For as Queen Esther when she was to go to the Tyrant Ahasuerus, to speak on the behalf of her Nation, though the weight of her business made her sad heart to take little delight in gay Clothing; yet she puts on her Royal Apparel, and all her Ornaments of Beauty, that the Beauty of her Person might promote the justness of her Cause: So Ministers, when they are to appear before Tyrannical Ears, (though their minds are fixed upon the weight of their work) must put on the Ornaments of Speech, that the pleasantness of their words may promote the speed of their great work, which is not to court and complement with enticing words of man's wisdom, but to save themselves and those that hear them.

What I have written concerning the parts of Publick Worship, especially Preaching and Reading the Homilies and Lyrurgy of our Church, has no design to cause them to clash one against another, or to undermine the honour due to any in its place, but to prevent extreams, in lifting up one to the disparagement of another, and to remove those stumbling-blocks which gave a disturbance both to things and persons; a work no way delightful in it self, and I was glad when it was finished.

If what is written concerning the scandal of Simony and Sacrilege doth no good to such as are guilty, yet 1. Good was designed to such. 2. It may prevent others from being guilty. 3. It may occasion the Heads in Families, Church and State, to take into consideration the wrongs done to God's House and Revenue, and to become Advocates on their behalf, against three sorts, 1. The Sacrilegious Impropiator; 2. The corrupt Patron; 3. The pilfering Parishioners; all these joyn in their places to rob the Church what they can. The first takes away the Mansion-house, the Glebe, and the great Tithes; the second is false to his Trust, robs his God, and occasions the Clergy-men to justify his Thievery, and to forswear himself; the last by their old and new corrupt Customs, and their yearly pilfering, and with-holding Dues from the Church, do justify the two former, and become guilty of the sin of Sacrilege. Under the Usurpations of these three the Church mourns, and by a known figure might be brought in making such bitter Complaints against them as might melt a heart of Brass, 1. From the consideration of what she once was; 2. Of what

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what she now is; 3. Of what she is like to be reduced to, if none stand up to plead her Cause.

If any Clergy-man appear in this Cause, he is looked upon as Popishly affected, his Person is contemned, and his Doctrine slighted; nay, if he whom the Minister employs to gather his just Dues, be faithful to his Trust, he hazards to lose the favour of most Parishioners: So prone are they to this sin, they cannot endure any that appears against it. If some considerable Lawyer would employ his Pen this way, it would have greater influence upon persons guilty, than any thing a Minister can say. Sir Simon Degg, in his Book called *The Parsons Counsellor*, part 1. cap. 5. page 49. relates an act of great cruelty in a Patron, who had in his gift a Vicaridge of 40 l. per annum, and forced a poor Vicar into a Bond of Resignation to obtain it, and after took from the poor Vicar 20 l. a year (half the value) and he dares not question the Patron for so doing. The good old Lawyer cries out, *opus est Medico*, no health can be expected in Church or State, until this Cure be made; nor no Physician can cure this but a Parliament. There is no question but many more Instances of the like, or worse nature may be given; the sin is now grown common and impudent, and such as are guilty do not want some Counsellors (or rather Concealers) of the Law, to whisper the Legality of it, though it's directly contrary to the design of all Laws both Divine and Humane. The truth is, many men have resolved the whole of their Religion into Humane Laws, their Fear, their Faith, their Truth, and whole Worship towards God are taught, and exacted by the Precepts of men, *Ila. 29. 13.* The Magistrates are their Gods, Humane Laws are their Scripture, and the Lawyers are their Preachers to solve their Cases of Conscience, and direct their way. A few Lines sent from a Magistrate by the hand of an Officer, will prevail more with them, than the most holy Minister sent from God, with the Bible in his hand can do. All which considerations cry aloud to our Governours, to confront such wickedness, and to deliver the Nation and themselves from that Curse, *Mal. 3. 9.* Ye are cursed with a Curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole Nation. It was good Advice given to all good Patriots in both Houses of Parliament in the year 1689. in a little Book called *Englands Wants*, page the 8th, the words are these.

For buying in of Impropriations, a work not only worthy of a Parliament, but to the doing whereof, all the Parliaments since 27 H. 3. stand obnoxious (saith the Learned Bacon) and bound in Conscience to God, whereby the Church might enjoy her own again, the King's Revenue much increased by Tenths and first Fruits, and the Cures of all those great and populous Parishes hitherto starved

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starved for want of Spiritual Food, be duly served, and the soul guilt of that abominable sin of Sacriledge taken off this Nation, and off the Protestant Religion, &c.

Metinks I hear God himself giving the same Advice to England that he did to Israel long since, Mal. 3. 10. Bring ye all the Tithes into the Store-house, that there may be meat for mine House, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the Windows of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. In the former verses the Lord charges them with Sacriledge, and tells them, They were cursed with a Curse. Here he promises to bless them, upon this condition that they bring in all the Tithes into the Store-house, for the maintenance of his Worship. It was the Parliament that first took away Tithes from the Church, (and as the famous Bacon saith) stand bound in Conscience towards God to restore them to the Church ; and as this will deliver the Nation from the guilt of Sacriledge, so it will procure a Blessing of the Lord of Hosts upon our Governours, Government and Governed, upon our Arms and Armies both by Sea and Land, upon all Relations of Persons in Families, Church and State : God is able to give a Being to his Promises, and he never failed any that trusted in him. But this corruption in Patrons greatly aggravates the sin and guilt. And suppose a Gentleman's Steward whom he entrusts to take in Servants into his house to do his work, should do by his Master, as the Patron doth by his Maker, admit none into his Masters work without a considerable reward to himself, how odious would such a Steward be, how suddenly would he be called to an account, and how severely would he be punished ? The patient God suffers himself to be robbed, and is silent, yet his wrath is upon the wing, in pursuit of them ; and though they escape man's punishment, yet God will most certainly and severely punish them.

The Preaching of God's Word is set forth by the shining of the Elementary Sun, the falling of the Rain, and blowing of the natural Wind ; what these are to the body and bodily concerns, that is Preaching to the Souls of men. Now suppose there were in every Parish some one man entrusted with the distribution of these three common and great blessings to the natural World, and he should do as the corrupt Patron and all Sacrilegious persons do, expose them to sale, and no man should have a Beam of the glorious Sun to warm him, nor a drop of Rain to cool him, nor a gentle Air to breath in, without Money, or some Reward ; who can express how sad a condition all persons would be in as to their bodily concerns ? how would all Creatures pine away, and by degrees come to their first nothing ? The whole World would soon become a disconsolate Grave to

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all living Creatures. And if any thinks none would be so vile as to buy and sell these, though they were in their power, they are mistaken; for such as buy and sell the Revenue of the Church do worse; for as the Soul is more precious than the Body, so the Sun of Righteousness, the Spiritual Rain of God's Word, and the breathing of the Spirit of God in Ordinances are far more precious than the Elementary Sun, or the natural Rain and Wind; and he that scruples not to do the greater, will not scruple to do the lesser: He that shews himself perfidious in things that concern mens Souls, will not care to do so in reference to mens Bodies.

The time was when Tithes were thought due by the Divine Law, and needed no Magistrate to enforce their payment, Ministers received them as from God, and People paid them as to God. But since the generality of men have turned Piety into Policy, and resolved their Religion into Humane Laws, and neither believe God nor Devil, Heaven nor Hell, Salvation nor damnation, but what Humane Laws teach and exact, that will not do Justice for God's sake, nor for Conscience sake; they must be forced to do it for Wraths sake, that such as fear not the God of Heaven, may be brought to fear the Visible Gods on Earth.

What Censures this small Book is like to suffer, I know not; but this I know, that it was designed to a common good: And if any think it worth an Answer, I humbly desire they would lay aside all base compliances, all vain-glory in derogating from others, to add to themselves, and would fix their thoughts upon the same Text, and open it more plainly, powerfully and profitably, and I shall be glad of giving the occasion, more glad of such as take it, and most glad that both tend to promote the Duty in the Text, of giving no offence in any thing, that the Ministry be not blamed.

2 Cor.



2 Cor. 6. 3.

Giving no offence in any thing that the Ministry be not blamed.

AS the Gospel (or Word of Reconciliation) is from God, and tends to make men like God, and at last brings them to God, so the Ministers to whom God hath committed the Word of Reconciliation are called Embassadors, and the Tenour of their Commission is recorded in the 19th verse of the foregoing Chapter, to wit, *That God was in Christ reconciling the World unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the Word of Reconciliation.* His meaning is, that God was in Christ laying the Foundation of Reconciliation, and contriving Articles of Peace for Fallen Man, but actually to treat with sinners, and to sollicite a fair correspondency between Heaven and Earth, so as that sinful Man might be persuaded and actually drawn to a Reconciliation with his Maker, that he hath imposed upon his Ministers, to whom he hath committed that Word which clearly holds forth the Terms and Conditions of Reconciliation, and serves also to invite and persuade men to it.

Now then, saith the Apostle, in verse 20. we are Ambassadors for Christ, to promote by our Treaties with Fallen Man, that which Christ himself was employed to procure, and as such we do with all importunity, not only in the name of God, but in the stead of Christ, and in a sense representing his Person, persuade, exhort, yea and beseech you to be reconciled to God.

And he reiterates this request upon new and fresh Motives, in the first verse of this Chapter; *We then as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the Grace of God in vain. We then as Cooperators with Christ, employed by him to publish his Laws, declare his Pardons, and denounce his Judgments, do beseech you that you would not neglect so great Salvation, nor turn from the*

Gospel we Preach, but embrace it by Faith into your hearts, and practise it in your lives, so it will not be in vain, but of great value to you. And that there might be no failure on our parts, who are Ministers, but that you might willingly embrace what is freely offered, we are careful to do our work so as that we might not give any just offence in any thing, that the Ministry be not blamed.

The Text may be called an Apostolical Canon, and hath dependance upon the first verse both for grammar and sense (for the second verse is in a Parenthesis, which gives only a little diversion, but makes no division) and it may be read thus; *We then who are workers together with him, giving no offence in any thing, that the Ministry be not blamed, do beseech you also that ye receive not the Grace of God in vain.* In which words three things are considerable.

1. The nature and quality of the work the Apostle was called to, and laboured in, expressed by the word (*διακονία*) Ministry.

2. What he carefully endeavoured to avoid in doing that work, which was to give (*ὑποκρίναι ἢ ὑποκρίναι*) no offence in any thing, which relates to a double universality, 1. Of Things; 2. Of Persons; the one is expressed, the other is necessarily implied; for giving no offence (*ἢ ὑποκρίναι*) in any thing, doth include giving no offence (*ὑποκρίναι*) to any person, whether Jew, Gentile, or Christian.

3. The ground and reason of this care and endeavour, it was (*ἵνα μὴ μωροῦσιν ἢ διακονία*) that the Ministry be not blamed, or that none may act the *Mamus* upon the Ministry.

I had designed to have opened the first of these, by shewing that the Ministry is a work, and wherein it consists, and the qualities of it; but perceiving it would not consist with my designed brevity, I thought it better to say nothing, than but a little; and so shall pass it over, and insist upon the other particulars; the sum of all which may be comprehended in this Proposition or Doctrinal Conclusion.

Doct. *That it is the Duty of all the Ministers of Christ to perform their Ministerial Offices so, as to give no offence in any thing.*

Or, *To give no offence in any thing, that the Ministry be not blamed, is the constant and indispensable Duty of all Gospel Ministers.*

This

This was the great care, and constant endeavour of the holy Apostles, and ought to be the inward desire and outward endeavour of all faithful Ministers, to give no offence in any thing, that the Ministry be not blamed.

To offer to prove this, did at first seem to me needless, upon three accounts.

1. Because the Doctrine it self is so Scriptural and Rational, that Reason yields to it as soon as it is made known.

2. The People will readily believe it, though not one word be said in the proof of it; for as all persons naturally have more prying and sharper Eyes into other mens Duties than their own, so it is with their Ears also, they have chearful and erect Ears to listen unto what concerns the Duties of others, rather than their own: There is not one among the People but will give a quick Attention, and not only hear, but hearken while I shall treat of the Ministers Duty, and especially while I am pressing fo weighty a Duty as this, To give no offence in any thing.

3. In respect of the Ministers in general (*quotquot. positi* *et diastolici*) from the highest to the lowest, whom the Text chiefly concerns, they can, yea I hope all of them have, or will prove it to themselves, so as to lay it to heart as their Duty, and that is the best proof of it, when every one proves his own Duty, to the conviction of his own Conscience, so as his Conscience presses him to the practice of it.

But, if any expect it should be proved, that so it might be the more firmly believed, and truly practised, I shall very briefly prove it thus.

1. From Precept; Supream Authority commands it, 1 Cor. 10. 32. *Give no offence, neither to the Jew, nor to the Gentile, nor to the Church of God.* This is not left as a thing indifferent, that may be done, or not done, at pleasure; nor is it a bare Evangelical Counsel, but an absolute Precept, and of absolute necessity, by vertue of the positive Command of God. And although this Precept be given to all Christians in general, yet it laies hold upon all Ministers with a (*quanto magis*) greater rye or obligation; for if every Christian be bound to give no offence, in any thing, or to any person, lest his Profession should be blamed, or lest any should not be won to approve and embrace it, how much more is a Minister bound to beware of giving any just offence that may blemish his Ministry, or hinder

any person from being won unto Christ by it. If it be the Duty of Subjects, Servants and Children, to obey the lawful Commands of their Kings, Masters and Parents, much more ought all to obey God, whose Commands are all holy, just and good, both in themselves and in their Influences: And if every Soul ought to be subject to the Higher Powers on Earth, not only for Wrath, but for Conscience sake, much more ought every Soul to be subject to the Highest Power in Heaven and Earth. This is as potent an Argument as can be given to animate any sort of men (especially Ministers) to their Duties, and such as cast his Commands behind their backs have no Call from God to declare his Statutes, or to take his Covenant into their mouths, *Psal. 50. 16.* God looks upon such as unworthy the Office, to Preach to others, what they will not practise themselves.

2. From President, and Example of all the faithful Ministers of Christ in all Ages, who made this (next to the Glory of God) the drift and scope of all they did; an Example we have in the Text, and it may be considered that the Apostle doth not speak in his own single person alone, but in conjunction with the rest of his Fellow-Apostles and Ministers of Christ; it was not only his care and constant endeavour, but they all joyned with him in this Work. And it is alledged for an evidence of approving themselves in all things as faithful Ministers of Christ, as in the verse following the Text; *But in all things approving our selves as the Ministers of Christ.* Whosoever therefore would approve himself in all things as a Minister of Christ, is bound in this particular to follow the Examples of these in the Text: And whosoever expects to share with all the Holy Prophets, Apostles, and best Preachers that ever lived on Earth, in the comforts they met with in this World, and the glorious rewards they are crowned with in the other, ought in all reason to share with them in their work, and in particular to set their heads, hearts, and utmost endeavours to this Duty of giving no offence in any thing, that the Ministry be not blamed.

3. From rational deductions to enforce it, the Apostle passes by many Reasons, and Considerations might have been made use of, as that it might be a means to secure his Person from the malice of his bitter Enemies, and to preserve his good name from Reproaches and false Aspersions, and procure him a fair Testimony

Testimony from all ingenuous people. But he passes by all such worldly, personal and selfish Considerations (and so shall I) and speaks of another Reason, which was of more prevalency with him, than either his personal Safety and Liberty, or his worldly Reputation and Respect, or any earthly advantage whatsoever, and that is, *That the Ministry be not blamed.* Nothing was so dear unto him as the honour of the Ministry: Nay, Life it self (which is the most precious thing in Nature) was less dear to him than the discharge of the Ministry committed to him, so as to keep it from blame, *Acts 20. 24. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto my self, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the (διακονίαν) Ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus.* The way to finish it with joy, was to behave himself in it, so as that it might not be blamed. See what it is that lies next the heart of a faithful Minister of Christ, which he is tender of above all things in this World, it is to preserve the Ministry committed to him, pure and inviolable from all just cause of blame, and in this Ministers may have an unquestionable Evidence of their fidelity, that they love Christ, and are beloved of Christ, if they set their hearts to this Duty, or lay this Apostolical Canon upon their Breasts as a Pectoral Sacram, *To give no offence in any thing, that the Ministry be not blamed.*

The honour or dishonour of the Ministry it self depends upon the doing or not doing of this; if this Rule be followed, the Effect will be good, God will be glorified, the Gospel will flourish, and the mouths of wicked men will be stopt; if this be neglected, omitted or disregarded, the Effect will be pernicious and dismal; for then not only God's Ambassadors, but God's Word and Ordinances, and the Ministry it self will be blemished and blamed, or (as the Greek word signifies) men will act the *Momus* upon the Ministry by way of scorn, derision, biting, censures and bitter words, clouding the Ministers with black Aspersions, and bringing into contempt not only the Ambassadors, but the Ambassage; and let this suffice for the proof of it.

We come now to enter upon a vast Sea of matter, which will require some time, and a wise steerage to cut through, to open plainly and fully the nature and practice of this Duty, which is of so large extent, and runs in so many Channels, by reason of so many particular circumstances, intricacies, and Cases of

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Conscience, accosting its practice, that it is no easie matter either to understand it ones self, or to open it clearly and rightly to others; and therefore that I might not wander in a Labyrinth of uncertainties, and lose my self and my Reader, I shall make use of this Compass to steer by.

1. To shew what is meant here, and elsewhere in Scripture by an offence.

2. What it is to give an offence.

3. Wherein a Minister of the Gospel is liable above others to give an offence.

1. The first thing necessary to be cleared and understood, is what an offence is in the sense and language of the Holy Scripture; for the notion of Scandal is not to be found in Pagan Authors, and besides in common Language to give an offence, is to do that which displeaseth, or offendeth the mind of another: But both the word and sense here used by St. Paul signifies quite another thing.

There are several words in the Original which in our English Translation are rendred an offence: As for example.

1. The Greek word *παράστωμα*, is used more than once by St. Paul in the 5th chapter to the *Romans*, to signifie an offence, and it properly signifies a fall or lapse from the Rule of Righteousness, or any sin against the Law of God, whether Original or Actual: But the word rendred an offence comes short of expressing the true notion or meaning of an offence in the sense of the Text; for every (*παράστωμα* or) sin against God is not an offence according to the word in the Text.

2. The word used in the Text by the Apostle is *σέστωμα*, and there is another often used in Scripture of the same derivation, *σέστωμα*, both which properly signifie any block, rub, obstacle, impediment or hinderance laid in a mans way, upon which he may fall, be detained, stumble, or be stopt in his course, and therefore is fitly rendred a stumbling-block, *Rom. 14. 13.* But judge this rather, that no man put a (*σέστωμα*) stumbling-block in his Brothers way; and it is also rendred (*λίθος σέστωμα*) a stone of stumbling.

3. There is another word frequently used in Scripture, and signifies the same thing: *Woe unto the World (and all kindred) because of offences, for it must needs be that (τὰ σκάνδαλα) offences will come,*
but

but woe to that man by whom the (π σκάνδαλον) offence cometh. This word, as Grammarians tell us, doth properly signifie that small piece of Wood in a Trap which we call the Bridge, upon which, when the Vermin, or any Creature for which the Trap was set, comes to tread on, suddenly the Trap falls down, and the Creature is taken, held and ensnared, ruined and destroyed.

The Life of a Christian is set forth in Scripture by going, walking, running in a Race, and by fighting, striving, and wrestling: And as persons are offended, hurt and ruined in going, walking or running in a natural sense, when any stumbling-blocks, traps, snares, or any impediments are laid in their way; so this is by way of allusion applied unto Christians in a spiritual sense. Offences are as so many spiritual traps and snares, stones and blocks, whereby they are grieved, ensnared, do stumble and fall, or are hurt and ruined.

It is no delight that I take in Grammatical Discourses, in searching into the signification of words; yet when the proper signification of words do help to a clearer notion of the things, it is then requisite to use Grammar; and thus much we have gained by lifting into the signification of the word; That an offence properly taken is something laid in the way of another, which hinders, estranges, frights, or tempts them to forsake the Faith, or turns them from the profession of it. Whatsoever gives just cause of grief, sorrow, or discouragement, to walk in a Christian course, may be called an offence, a scandal, a stumbling block, a stone of stumbling, an occasion of falling; or any thing that is set in the way to hinder, entangle, ensnare, catch, hurt, gaul, or ruine another in a spiritual sense; and accordingly an offence is described by the Learned Schoolman *Aquinas* to be (*dictum aut factum minus rectum praebens alteri occasionem ruinae*) something spoken or done otherwise than it ought, which to another becomes (or might become) an occasion to fall into sin and ruin.

In which description, though he gives the difference rightly between an offence and other sins, (for all sin is not an offence in the proper signification, but such only as give an occasion to others to fall by them) yet I cannot but wonder that so famous, and so acute a Schoolman should so much fail in that which supplieth the place of the *Genus* (as Logicians call it) in his description; for *dictum aut factum minus rectum*, are too narrow to include all offences and scandals: Many offences are given not only (*in dictis & factis*) in words and deeds, but for want of say-
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ing and doing in due time, and place, and manner, that which a man was bound to say, and was his duty to do.

Offences may be given as well by sins of omission, as by sins of commission. As for instance, if a Minister of the Gospel sees people (carried with a blind Zeal) run headlong into such ways as are likely to be destructive to their own Souls, and pernicious to the Church and State, and shall omit to warn them of their sin and danger, if possible or probable he might reclaim them, his bare silence and omission of his duty in this case becomes (*αρεσμοσι, σκάνδαλον*) an offence, a stumbling-block, or snare to them; for thereby they may gather more boldness to adventure upon their sin, more hardness of heart to continue securely in it; and for want of warning may perish everlastingly, and then their perishing is by God (himself) put upon the Watchmans account, *Ezek. 3. 18. His blood will I require at thy hand*; but of this more afterward. If then in the bare omission of what is manifestly a duty, there may be (a *αρεσμοσι*) an offence given by a Gospel Minister, then it is evident that the famous Schoolmans (*dictum aut factum*) something spoken, or done, otherwise than it should, was too short to comprehend all kind of offences: Yet I humbly conceive his Errour may easily be amended by describing an offence or scandal thus: It is *delictum aliquod apertum, quo praeberetur alteri occasio ruinae*) some fault either of omission or commission open and manifest, whereby is occasioned the fall and ruine of another. For if the fault be not manifest, it cannot be an occasion of falling to another.

By what hath been said it is easie to apprehend the true notion of an offence, and what it signifies in the sense of the Apostle; and this is evident that an offence doth not properly lie in saying, doing, or omitting that which doth displease, and offend distempered Palates, or perverted Judgments, but in saying, doing, or omitting any thing that may really be a stumbling-block, a trap, a snare, or an occasion of falling into sin; for a Minister of the Gospel may perhaps very much please the generality of the People to whom he ministers; yet in that very thing in which he seems to please them, he may give a real offence, and lay stumbling-blocks before them. And again, he may very much offend their minds and fancies whilst he honestly endeavours to remove all offences, and stumbling-blocks that give occasion to them to fall into sin, as appears by an instance of the Prophet *Jeremiah*, and the false Prophets of his time.

How

How deeply did the Prophet *Jeremiah* run himself into the displeasure of the King and Princes of *Judah*? How generally did he draw upon him the hatred of the People? so that it almost broke the heart of the holy Prophet, and made him cry out, *Woe is me, my Mother, that thou hast born me, a man of strife, and a man of contention to the whole Earth, Jer. 15. 10.* And after this we find him cursing his birth-day; but what had the good Prophet said or done that he was so generally hated? Alas he had done nothing to incur the displeasure of any; it was for discharging his duty, for telling them plainly they put their trust in lying words, and outward forms of Religion; saying, *The Temple of the Lord, The Temple of the Lord*: They were guilty of Thievery, Adultery, Perjury, and Murder it self, yet if they went to the Temple, and there performed some hypocritical bodily service, they thought they were secure, and God would wink at their grossest Immoralities. The Prophet told them what the Temple of the Lord was, *Jer. 7. 4.* and that if they did not speedily amend their ways and doings, he would speedily give them up to a miserable Captivity. All this displeasure fell upon this good Prophet while he endeavoured to remove the stumbling-blocks out of their way, which he plainly saw would be occasions of their Ruin.

But in the mean time, the false Prophets who spake to please, and kept silent for fear of displeasing, and sang that pleasant note to the People, *You shall not see the Sword, neither shall ye have Famine, but assured Peace in this place, Jer. 14. 13, 14.* How gracious (may we think) were these in the sight both of the King, Princes and People, though they were false Prophets, and what they prophesied was false, yet because it was pleasant to them, they highly esteemed them; and that even for this very thing wherein they had laid a stumbling-block before them to ruin them temporally, and without God's great mercy eternally; and let this suffice to shew what an offence is in the sense of the Apostle.

We now come to the second general Head; to shew what it is to give an offence: There is a great emphasis in the word (*Idiosyncrasy*) giving no offence. The Apostle speaks (as a Learned man observes upon the words) warily; he doth not say, avoiding all things at which men may take offence, but he speaks of giving no offence; this last was possible, and his duty to do, the former neither was possible, nor lawful to do.

And here I must make use of a distinction concerning offences and scandals, which though it be common, yet is plain and clear, and so manifestly grounded on Scripture and Reason, that any ordinary capacity, may perceive both the truth, necessity and profitable use of it.

Of Offences.

1. There are some both given and taken, and these are sins both in the giver and taker, but greater in the giver.
2. There are some offences given, but not taken; there the sin rests only in the giver.
3. There are some taken, but not given; there the sin rests only in the taker.

For brevities sake I will give an instance of both the first kinds in one Example, by which it will appear, that an offence given, though it be taken by some who are weak in grace, yet by others who are stronger it is not taken, nor proves a stumbling-block to them; *Psal. 119. 165. Great peace have they which love thy Law, and nothing shall offend them.* Or as the Hebrew reads it, they have no stumbling-blocks. That proves a snare, a trap, a stumbling-block to partial, dissembling Hypocrites, that love not the Law of God, which doth not become so to them who entirely and sincerely love it; so that the same offence given, may, in respect of differing persons, be taken, and not taken. And the Instance I promised to give, shall be in that offence given by the great Apostle *St. Peter*, which I mention the rather, because offences given by great Examples, are far more dangerous; and that it may be a warning to us to beware of taking the greatest Example for our fixed Rule; lest it become an offence, or stumbling-block to us, *Gal. 2.* from the 10th to the 16th verse, we have the whole story, the sum of which is, That *St. Peter* being at *Antioch*, and freely conversing with the Gentiles converted to the Christian Faith, eating freely of all sorts of meats with them, not regarding the Judaical Differences; yet when some of the Brethren of the Circumcision were come thither from *Jerusalem* (sent by *James*) he withdrew and separated himself from the converted Gentiles, not conversing and eating freely with them, of all kinds of meats as formerly, and this he did (as the Text saith) *fearing them of the Circumcision.* See what an offence may arise from a weak fear of displeasing and offending a Party. and the dissimulation

lation which such weak fears usually produce: For by this the Apostle *Peter* gave a real offence both to the converted Jews and to the Gentiles: To the converted Gentiles, who by his practice might conceive some necessity for them to observe the Judaical Ceremonies, or otherwise that they could not be bodied with them in the Communion of one Church; and this might have discouraged many of them from embracing the Christian Faith, if it must needs draw after it the Jewish Ceremonies. And to the Jews themselves it was an offence, a stumbling-block, hardening them in their averfeness from converfing freely with the Gentiles; except upon terms of observing their Ceremonies: And because by his Example they were led to do the same thing which he himself did. For the other Jews likewise difsembled with *Peter* (as *St. Paul* tells us) so that *Barnabas* was also carried away with their difsimulation. Who knows how far this one act of *St. Peter* might have proceeded to the scandalizing both of Jews and Gentiles? and to have hindered at least for a time their happy Coalition and Union together into one Church, if the Apostle *St. Paul* had not stood up with great courage and fincerity to remove their stumbling-block.

How tender foever the Papists are of *St. Peters* Honour, yet they do acknowledge that here was an offence given by this great Apostle, and it was taken by some Jews who followed his example, for if *St. Peter* gave an offence himself, they who followed tho' out of weaknefs could not be wholly guiltlefs. But neither *St. Paul* nor the Gentiles, probably being preserved by his example and Doctrines, did stumble at this stumbling block, or drink in that error which *Peters* Fact might have occafioned; an error which might have been very prejudicial to the Christian Faith.

We have here a clear example of an offence given, that was taken by some, not by others, which frequently falls out in other Scandals of ill Life and Converfation given either by Ministers or other Christians; how readily do formal carelefs, and weak Christians, stumble and fall by reason of fuch Scandals? But Christians well grounded in Faith, fober Minded, Judicious, and Circumfpect (like fome birds that fee and avoid the Net) are not moved to fall by them. But howfoever if a scandal be given whether it be taken, or not taken, it is a Sin in the giver.

There are yet two things to be taken notice of concerning a scandal, or an offence given.

1. Sometimes it is given with a direct purpose and intention to draw

draw another into sin, as a Trap is set to catch a Beast, or a Net to ensnare a Bird; such was that Stumbling Block which *Balaam* taught *Balak* to cast before the Children of *Israel*, to draw them to eat of things Sacrificed to Idols, and to commit Fornication, and consequently to alienate the favour of God wholly from them, this highly aggravates the sin of giving offence.

2. An offence is often given without any the least purpose, desire or intention to draw or occasion any other to fall, yet this innocency as to intention cannot excuse the sin of him that gives the offence, any more than only (*a tanto*) from being so great; for if the fact it self be a scandal and culpable, tho' the intention in it were honest and good, this will not excuse it, as may appear by that sharp reply of our Saviour to *Peter*, *Matth. 16. 22, 23.* *Peter* had no ill meaning, but spake rather out of his tender affection to Christ, when he said be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee. But this did not excuse him, nor abate his Lords displeasure, when he said, get thee behind me, Satan, (*originalis peccati*) thou art an offence to me. And let this suffice concerning an offence given, whether taken or not taken, whether with an intention of scandalizing another or without.

3. Concerning an offence taken, when nothing is said or done, or omitted which might give any just occasion, to another to stumble or to be offended, yet an offence is taken by them, this is usually called (*Scandalum Phariseorum*) the scandal of the Pharisees, because the Hypocrisy and Malice of that sect to our Saviour caused them often to fall into this sin; there was nothing done or taught by our blessed Saviour, tho' his words were never so Divine and Heavenly, such as never man spake, and tho' his works were never so Charitable, Beneficial and Miraculous, but the Pharisees and all Partial Hypocrites, were offended at him, and put malicious constructions upon all he said and did, to represent him to the people as faulty, and make him odious, *Matth. 15. 12.* knowest thou not (say the Disciples to Christ) that the Pharisees were (*ισχυροκαλισησιν*) offended after they heard this saying. But Christ replies as nothing regarding at all their being offended, seeing he had given them no just cause of offence; Let them alone (saith he) they be blind leaders of the blind, &c.

They took an offence at the meanness of the Birth, Education, Poverty and Temptations of Christ, yet it were horrid Blasphemy, to think that ever any offence was given by him in word or deed, who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth, *1 Per.*

2. 22. Christ Crucified was a Stumbling block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greek: Tho' his excellent Doctrine and Miracles wrought to confirm it, did incline them to have a good opinion of him, and to follow him with the multitude, yet when they saw him Crucified, and his followers liable to such Persecutions, and Sufferings as doth attend Christianity, they were discouraged, and turned away from following; and hence our Saviour pronounces him Blessed that shall not be offended in him, *Luke 7. 23.* and *John 16. 1.* "These things have I spoken unto you, that you should not be offended. Our Lord hath not only foretold the Persecutions that shall befall all his followers, but declared them blessed that shall not be offended or discouraged from the Profession of a Crucified Saviour.

And we may conclude that St. *Paul* who clears himself in the Text from giving offence in any thing, was not more happy than his Master in this, to have no offence taken at his words or ways, as might be shewed by many instances if it were needful. Nor must any Faithful Minister of the Gospel, be his Doctrine never so sound, and his Life never so blameless, expect to be so happy as to have no offence taken at either, or both.

But this is our defence and comfort, that our duty binds us only to give no offence, in any thing, and if none be given by us, yet taken by others, the offence is wholly in themselves, not in us; when Ministers reprove mens Vices, they are offended, but because they did that which ought to be reprov'd, the offence is wholly in themselves. It was the saying of an approved Author, *melius est ut Scandalum oriatur quàm veritas relinquatur*, It is better that an offence be taken than the truth should be betrayed. Ministers must not forsake their duty for fear of offending. And this may suffice to shew what it is to give an offence.

3. The third thing is wherein a Minister of the Gospel is liable more than others to give offence, which he must carefully beware of. And this puts me into a kind of fear, trembling, and jealousy, when I begin to consider in how many things, we are liable to give offence, and are likely to do so, without great Care, Circumspection, and Vigilance over our selves. It cannot be expected that I should give particular instances in all things, it must suffice if I touch some Chief things, and leave the other to your Pious Meditation.

1. The first thing wherein a Minister of the Gospel is liable to give offences is, in his entrance upon the Ministry when he is neither
rightly

rightly qualified for it, nor rightly call'd to it, nor rightly placed and settled in it.

1. When he is not rightly qualified for it; what qualifications are requisite for such as would be admitted into the work of the Ministry, are fully declared (by St. *Paul* in two places of Scripture, and that both in the Negative and Affirmative, *1 Tim.* 3. from the first to the 14. verse, and *Tit.* 1. 6, 7, 8, 9: The whole of both these (for Brevities sake) may be reduced to four heads: 1. A Rational Head. 2. A Learned Tongue. 3. A Gracious Heart. 4. A Holy Life.

1. He ought to have a Rational Head, no way defective in the Principles of Natural Reason, whereby he may be enabled to judge of Objects. This *Solomon* calls the Candle of the Lord, and St. *John* calls it the light, that which lighteth every man that comes into the World. And St. *Paul* calls it, the Law written in the heart. This is the first Light and Law that ever was made known to man, and it is the foundation of all other Lights and Laws since given man, and the very Seat and Subject of all supernatural grace; and so far as this Light and Law of Reason will carry a man, it is the most certain and conclusive. Reason consists of first Principles, and of such Conclusions as are drawn from them, and from the observation of sense, and therefore nothing can be more certain than such Conclusions, and by consequence is very useful for all, but in a special manner for Ministers, who will have occasion sometimes to make use of such Logick, which is nothing else but Reason put into method. This is that by which the Preacher must prove some of the highest Principles of Religion, and by the help of which he must defend them all: And hence St. *Paul* calls the whole of Religion a Reasonable Service, because Reason proves some of its Principles, and defends them all.

It is therefore requisite for all such as design, or are designed to this work, to see that their Souls be furnished with such natural Understanding, Judgment, Wisdom, Invention, Elocution, and other abilities and capacities as are generally bestowed upon Humane Nature; for if any be defective in these, it will be difficult to make such good Scholars, more difficult to make them good Philosophers, but most difficult to make them good Preachers; such may be fit for some other Calling, but are most unfit for this.

2. He must have a Learned Tongue, *Isa.* 50. 4. *The Lord hath given*

given me the Tongue of the Learned, that I might know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. It matters not whether the Prophet speaks in the person of Christ, or in his own person, seeing he mentions it, as a needful requisite, to enlighten such as are in darkness, to convince such as wander, to heal the wounded, to settle the wavering, to resolve the doubting, to rescue the tempted, and to comfort and encourage penitent Souls: He that is to do all these, had need to have the Tongue of the Learned. The Holy Scriptures in some places are dark and obscure, and the sense lies hid many times under Tropes and Figures, and highest strains of Rhetorick. There are also allusions to Antient Customs, Proverbs, Laws, and Antiquities of the Assyrian, Persian, Greek, and Roman Governments. Some Scriptures admit of a double sense, Literal and Mystical; and some Texts seem to clash and be repugnant one to another: The Preacher must understand how to open dark places, to reconcile such as seem to differ, and to compare such as are doubtful; and this cannot be done without a competent knowledge in Languages, and in all Arts and Sciences useful to understand God's Word, not only in the Translation, but in the Original. The Scripture makes mention of the Schools of the Prophets, where the Sons of the Prophets were trained up in studying and learning the Law of God, that they might be fitted to teach others. *Moses* was learned in all the Wisdom of the Egyptians. *Daniel* and his companions had skill in all Learning and Wisdom. *St. Paul* thanked God he spake with more Tongues than all the false Prophets of his time. *Apollos* was Eloquent and Mighty in Scripture. And *Timothy* from a Child had been taught to know the Holy Scripture. And although the Apostles were illiterate men at the first, yet before Christ sent them into the wide World, he gave them the Tongue of the Learned.

We live in an age that flies at all learning, and is quick-sighted in spying faults, and many hearers are able to see through the ignorance of a Clergy man, and censure him if he speaks impertinently, loosely, or improperly. If he trip in his Citations of Authors, or if he pilfers the works of others, they can soon find him out, and be offended with him, therefore in an age of such Light all Ministers ought to be well furnished with such competent degrees of Artificial Learning as many enable them, 1. To understand Gods Word themselves, not only in the translation, but in the Language in which it was at first delivered, that they may upon
their

their own knowledge with more confidence say, Thus saith the Lord. 2. That they may be able to deliver the Truth in fit and proper Language to others, without wresting it from the genuine sense and true meaning of it; as some places of Scripture are more hard to understand, so such as are unlearned and unstable are most forward to fasten upon them, and through ignorance and self-interest do wrest and wring them, from the true sense to that which is false, 2 *Pet.* 3. 16. They who wrest the Scriptures to their own Damnation, and to the Damnation of all others that do hear, believe and practice their Doctrine are here called such as are unlearned and unstable: they neither understand the Truth themselves, nor are able to deliver it to others. 3. That they may be able to defend the Truth against such as oppose it. What St. Paul said of himself, all Ministers ought to say in their places, *Phil.* 1. 17. *I am set for the defence of the Gospel.* Humane Learning is so very needful in Divinity that none without some competent measure of it, can rightly understand, divide, methodize, deliver and defend the Truth, an illiterate person is not fit to be either a Lawyer or a Physician, much less to be a Preacher, which requires as great a stock of humane learning as either of them. Besides, let it be considered, that tho' it is a Truth, that persons may have the literal knowledge of Gods Word, who are strangers to the Spiritual Knowledge of it. Yet it is as true also that none can have the Spiritual Knowledge of Gods Word without the literal.

3. He must have a Gracious Heart. Learning in the Head without Grace in the heart, is but like the Glow-worm that casts a light, but hath no heat in it. Grace is the Image of God, and the Glory of all Natural and Artificial Accomplishments, and that which renders persons amiable in Heaven and Earth. St. Paul who was so eminent an Apostle both in doing and suffering the Divine Will, imputes all to this, 1 *Cor.* 15. 10. *By the Grace of God I am what I am,* he passes by all his Natural and Artificial Endowments, as very inconsiderable to the Grace of God: great Schollars may be great Sinners, and except Grace Sanctify Learning, the greater Schollars the greater Sinners, and fitter Instruments to promote Satans interest in the World. Artificial Gifts may restrain Corruption, be a means to civilize persons, and get a name to live, but Grace mortifies Corruption, makes men truly Religious, and embalms their names in both Worlds. He who hath a rational Head, seconded with a Learned Tongue may be

be instrumental to convince, convert, and edify others, yet without Grace he himself is a Cast-away. It is therefore needful that such as design this Office, should not only have the Gift of Praying and Preaching, but the Grace of both, that his Words being seasoned with Grace, may Minister Grace to all that hear him, and the more his Sermons proceed from a Gracious Heart the more powerful they will be to beget, increase, and perfect Grace and Holy Habits, in the Hearts of the hearers.

4. He must have a holy life and conversation, and this Crowns all the former qualifications and is the most unquestionable evidence of Grace in the Heart. It is a sufficient argument, the Tree is good when the Fruit it bears is so; so it argues our Graces are saving and sincere when they put us upon bringing forth the pleasant Fruits of Righteousness, and true Holiness. Among the many qualifications given to such as desire this Office, this is one, 1 *Tim.* 3. 7. Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without, lest he fall into reproach, and the snare of the Devil. Mark how this qualification is fronted with a moreover, as if he had said, this must be added to all the other requisites before named, that he be one of a pious and unblameable conversation, that even Infidels who are without the Pale of the Christian Church may have no just cause to blast his Reputation for any Immoralities, or Wickedness of his Life, and without this a Minister will soon find that his Person will be reproached, his Doctrine vilified, and himself tempted to study revenge, and fall into the snare of the Devil, or which is the same thing in effect, he will soon lose his Authority, wound his Credit, be a Scandal to the Gospel, and fall into Diabolical Snares.

These four must concur to fit Persons for this work, and these make Persons apt, fit, and able to teach; and he that wants these, and thinks that his Birth, Alliance, University Degrees, procuring Letters Testimonial to some Bishop, or that his Riches, Gold or Silver should answer his defects in Natural, Artificial, or Supernatural Abilities, he will find himself miserably deceived. Besides, good men will be ashamed of such, wicked men will despise such, and all sorts will be offended with such.

2. When he is not rightly called to it; concerning which four things may be said. all needful to be known.

1. That a Call from God is essentially necessary to constitute a Gospel Minister.

2. That none ought to assume the Office, nor undertake the

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work except he be called or sent. This *St. Paul* proves by a Spiritual Clymax to be necessary both for Preachers, and Hearers, and to be as perpetual as Praying, Believing, Hearing and Preaching, *Rom. 10. 15. How shall they Preach except they be sent?* As there can be no Salvation without Praying, nor no Praying, without Believing, nor no Believing without Hearing, nor no Hearing without Preaching, so there can be no Preaching without sending. Suppose a Man hath Gifts and Abilities in the Superlative degree, and that they are real, and suppose his intentions are sincere, and what he delivers is truth, and he is very zealous and powerful in his delivery, and very much applauded and followed; yet without sending, such have no warrant to Preach in Publick; for, *how shall they Preach except they be sent?* The Interrogation is a strong Negation; they cannot Preach as God's Ambassadors; for there is not one of God's Ministers upon Record, that ever did it without a Call; they may Preach as Impostors, but not as God's Ministers.

3. That God's Call to this work is twofold, 1. Either miraculous and extraordinary, without the use of Artificial means, or the intervention, suffrage or help of men. Thus the true Prophets of the Old Testament, and the Apostles and first Publishers of the Gospel in the New Testament were called. 2. Or mediate and ordinary in the use of such means, and by such Instruments, and in such manner as he hath appointed in his Word. Thus *Barnabas* and *Saul*, after they were inwardly called by the Holy Ghost, were confirmed in their Office by Men, and had a Patent given them by due Ordination, *Acts 13. 2. 3.* And in the next Chapter we find them Ordaining Elders in every Church. Thus *Timothew* and *Titus* were called, and both of them directed what kind of persons, and in what manner they were to admit into the Ministry. We read of many that were Assistants to *St. Paul* in the Ministry of the Gospel, yet none of them (that we read of) were qualified and called in that extraordinary way the Apostles were: And it's very probable that what knowledge they had, and for which they were thought fit to be Ordained, they had acquired it by the study and industry of the Brain, or by Instruction from others. By all which it is evident, 1. That the Apostles designed to leave a standing Ministry in the Church to the Worlds end, and that by orderly Ordination and Succession. 2. That as Christ called his Apostles and first Publishers of the Gospel in an extraordinary miraculous way, so the Apostles Ordain-

Ordained others in an ordinary way, and those so ordained did Ordain others to succeed them, and so it hath, and must continue to the end of the World.

4. As all that are called by God, are called one of these ways; so whosoever is called either of these ways, is able to make good proof of his Call, to any that shall question it. If he be called (as many pretend) by an Extraordinary Call, he ought and may make proof of it, as all the holy Prophets, and our Saviour Christ, and his Apostles did; none of which did impose their Doctrines upon the World, meerly upon the account of their own Authority, nor tell People they must believe, because they said they came from God, and were filled with the Spirit: But they all gave full proof of their Extraordinary Call, and confirmed it with Signs and Wonders, and divers Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghost, *Heb. 2. 4.*

Nicodemus was by this convinced, that Christ was a Teacher come from God, *John 3. 2.* because no man could do those Miracles he did, except God were with him. And when Christ sent forth his Disciples to Preach, he did empower them to prove their Extraordinary Call, *Matth. 10. 7, 8.* *As ye go, Preach, saying, The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Heal the Sick, cleanse the Lepers, raise the Dead, cast out Devils, &c.* All these miraculous Gifts were more fully conferred upon them after the Ascension of our Saviour; they could speak with other Tongues; they could infallibly foretell what should come to pass; they could discern the Spirits of Men, who were Sincere, and who were Hypocrites; they could inflict corporal punishment upon notorious Offenders; and in short, they could work Miracles, such as none else could; they could divide the Sea, cause the Elementary Sun to stand still, cause Iron to swim, heal all manner of Diseases, and raise Persons from Death to Life; by these they not only confirmed the Truth of their Doctrine, and gave rational Evidences of their Extraordinary Call, but stopped the mouths of all that questioned it.

If any pretend they are called in this Extraordinary way, and can prove it, as they did, we may conclude that this kind of Call is not yet ceased. But such as pretend this kind of Call, and cannot prove it, we may conclude, without breach of Charity, that they are given up to the efficacy of Errour, and to the power of Diabolical Impulses, and being deceived themselves, are Satans Instruments to deceive others.

* If they be called in the ordinary way, by Examination, Approbation, Ordination and Consecration of the Church, they may prove it by sensible Demonstration, or Patents as good as any can shew to prove their Title to any other Calling.

If they cannot prove their Call, neither of these ways, then we conclude that they are not called in God's way; for the whole Bible doth not afford one President of any true Prophet, Apostle or Preacher that ever undertook this Office without a Call one or both these ways. But their Call is either from, 1. Themselves they go, and run of their own accord. Or 2. From their ignorant and deluded Followers, who heap up to themselves Teachers after their own lusts, and cry them up for Men of the Spirit. Or 3. From Satan, who though he be a true Enemy to all regular and right Preaching, yet he highly approves of the Preaching of *Corah*, and all the falser Pophets, and of all such as have in any Age undertaken the work of the Ministry without a Call.

Suppose the same question put to such that the Jews put to Christ: *By what Authority dost thou these things, and who gave thee this Authority?* What answer could such give? They cannot say God sent them, for he never employed any to do his work without a Call one or both these ways. Perhaps they would answer (as *Jacob* did his Father concerning the Venison he brought to him) *How is it (said old Isaac) that thou hast found it so quickly, my Son? Gen. 27. 20.* And *Jacob* presently answers, *Because the Lord thy God brought it to me.* This perhaps would be the answer to such as question such uncalled Preachers, The Lord God brought it me, he inspired me; he poured his Spirit upon me, he sent me to declare against the sins of the Times and Places where I live, and I durst not disobey the Heavenly Call.

Such trifling as this our Times have been guilty of. But in plain English, such uncalled Preachers have no more to say in the justification of themselves, than *Corah*, or any of the false Prophets, or false Teachers that ever appeared upon the Stage. Nay, let me add further, that these gifted ones of our Times, do fall short of the Gifts and Abilities, the Credit and Fame the multitude of followers and admirers that *Corah*, *Theudas*, *Simon Magnus*, and many of the false Prophets had, and nothing these can say or do, or pretend to be said or done, but it has been said and done by those false Teachers who were far more considerable; and if those gave offence, and stand branded with the odious names of false Prophets, false Teachers, deceitful Workers, and must be judged

as such, sure they cannot escape that tread in their steps. To conclude, this is certain, that the Ministry is the work of the Lord, he is the Author, and ought to be the End of it; and Ministers must one day give an account both how they came into it, and how they have behaved themselves in it.

And it hath cost others who have invaded the work without a Call, very dear, the Earth opened her mouth and swallowed up *Corah, Dathan and Abiram*; it cost *Uzzah* his Life, and *Saul* his Kingdom, and will God spare such as tread in their steps? Besides, men would be loth to take upon them the Calling of an Earthly King's Ambassadour, or a Noble man's Steward, or a Judge of Assizes, or a Justice of Peace, or a Mayor in a Corporation, or a Commander in an Army without a Call, though they were never so well gifted and qualified for such Offices: If men blush for shame to do the less, why do they not tremble to do the greater? If this satisfy not such uncalled Teachers, let me leave this Advice with such People as incline to hear and follow such; *Judge of Preachers, not by their Gifts, Parts and Abilities, nor any thing on this side their Authority.* See that such as you hear have the outward Call, as well as the inward; that they be taught not only by God, but by Men; by this means you will never be misled, nor seduced by any sort of Teachers.

3. When he is not rightly settled in it, as to his Personal Residence, or when he wants a clear Providential Call to that particular Place and People, he is to exercise his Ministry in. The Church is now planted, and the Ministers are tyed to particular Congregations and settled Places, and these Places are called God's House, (as the Sabbath is called his Day) there the People meet to worship him; over this House the Minister is to be God's Steward, to break the Bread of Life faithfully to his Household, and to give to every one their Portion in due season. But when the Minister wants Faith and Patience to wait upon God, until he opens the door, and orders him a clear Call into his House; and through a wicked heart of unbelief, and doubtfulness of the Allsufficiency of *Jehovah*, climbs in by Simoniack Contract and Perjury, at once buying his Preferment with Money, and wounding his Conscience by Perjury, he opens the mouth of People against him, to say it was not his Parts, nor his Grace, nor his Wisdom, but his Purse, his Gold or his Wealth, that placed him over us to be our Minister.

Simony is an intent, purpose or desire to buy or sell a Spiritual Benefice;

Benefice, or any Corporal thing annexed to the Church or Place of Publick Worship.

How common soever this Sin is in this age yet former ages counted it a very great Iniquity ; some Learned, and Holy men have accounted it Heresie, others have thought it a sin that borders upon the unpardonable Sin, by reason that either virtually or actually it comprehends all sin, and is inconsistent with the presence of any saving Grace in the Heart ; all good Christians have looked upon it, as very detestable and scandalous in the Church of Christ, and hence our pious Ancestors have made Provincial and very severe Canons against it. There is also a Statute in force against it made 31. of *Eliz.* and since that an Oath against it, at the institution into Benefices in the 40th. Canon where the Clergy-man in his own person before his institution swears thus,

I W. L. do Swear that I have made no Simonical Payment, Contract or Promise, directly or indirectly, by my self or by any other to my knowledge, or with my consent, to any person or persons whatsoever, for or concerning the procuring and obtaining of this Ecclesiastical Dignity, Place, Preferment, Office, or Living, (naming the place) nor will at any time hereafter perform, or satisfy any such kind of Payment, Contract or Promise made by any other without my knowledge or consent. So help me God through Jesus Christ.

An Oath is one of the strongest ties that Heaven or Earth can give or expect, and this Oath is both assertory and promissory, and he that can deliberately read it, and considers what habitual pravity lies in the bottom of it, and what Hellish sins do accompany it, and how destructive it is in its effects, what an affront it is to the nominal and real attributes of God, and to his Laws and Ordinances, and to the publick good, and after all can swallow it, he is fitted for any wickedness upon occasion, and will not regard what duty he omits, nor what sin he commits, if he may promote his own Carnal and Worldly interest. If the sin of Lying be from the Devil, and makes men like him and at last brings them to him much more doth this sin, which is not only a lye told, but a lye deliberately sworn.

When our Saviour was on Earth he made a comparison between the whole World and one single Soul, *Matth. 16. 26. What*

is a man profited if he gain the whole World and lose his own Soul? he doth as it were take a pair of Ballances in his hand, and puts the whole World in one Ballance, and one single Soul in the other, and concludes that the whole World cannot countervail the loss of one Soul. One would think he who lays the Oath, and this Text together would tremble to commit the sin of Simony, and if he have, that it would breed Sulphur in his Breast till he Repent. Shall any take Gods holy and dreadful name in vain and be guiltless, and break his Oath and be delivered? How can he Preach the Word of God, that regards not the Oath of God? Is it likely that he can be true to the Souls of others, who is false to his own? Can he be Instrumental to save other mens Souls, who hath Damned his own? To forswear this sin and yet still to commit it, argues a person under the very Reign and Dominion of sin. The Heathens turned the word (*ἑκτε*) which signifies an Oath, to signify Hell, the proper place for perjured Persons. If it were not as natural for persons to cover sin, as to commit it, one would think, a sin of this nature would find none to speak a word on its behalf; but he that tempts men to this sin, can easily furnish them with devices not only to conceal, but if possible justify it. One buyes a Horse of the corrupt Patron, tho' he needs none, nor if he did would give such a price to any else; Another enters into Bonds of Resignation before he can get the Presentation; and sure he either doth, or in time will know what that means; Another buys the Presentation while the Incumbent lives, but sure he cannot be ignorant, what that means when the good old man dies; and how the Incumbents Life, or Death, makes this a sin or no sin, is a nice point in Divinity. Another hath a Relation, or Friend that does all, and the Clergy man knows no more of it than the Child that's new born, but sure the Clergy man cannot but be strangely surprized, when the Patron is so kind as to send a Presentation, to him who is a stranger, and suppose he in Truth knew nothing before, yet then he may conjecture that he had some friend in a Corner, to whom even out of ingenuity he ought to be really grateful. Thus Satan makes use of crafty Heads and false Hearts, to invent blinds and covers to hide this sin, both to stop the mouth of Conscience at present, and to shelter and save them from shame and punishment for future.

But if all these covers made to hide this sin be well considered, it will appear, 1. That neither the Divine Laws, nor the Law
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of Conscience are satisfied with this practice, if they be, what needs so many Clancular arts to hide it from both? 2. That the Clergy-man comes not to his Spiritual preferment, without some consideration given, either by himself, or some body else for him, and then how will Conscience dispense with those words in the Oath *directly* or *indirectly* by my self, or by any other? 3. Do not such proudly trample upon the wisdom and power of their Law-Makers, and frustrate the very end and design of the Laws made? Some are so vile as to wrest the Law, to justify this practice, but let such know that tho' our Laws do, and are forced sometimes to connive at this *sin* for want of due proof against it, yet they are far enough *either* from justifying or proving the legality of it, upon this ground and reason, because it's directly contrary to the end and design of all those Laws, Statutes, and Canons made against it. 4. Do not such endeavour to set the Laws of God, and humane Laws at variance, by breaking the one and then labouring to cover it with the other? 5. Doth not this argue such Clergy men, have resolved their Religion into humane Laws? Is not their fear, their Faith and all their Worship towards God, taught by the Precept of men? Is not a good Benefice *their* Creed, and Gain their Godliness? Do not such in effect *make* the Patron their God, and Humane Laws their Scripture? How truly may such be call'd Simonists for treading in his steps? Hewas in the Gall of bitterness, and bond of Iniquity, yet affected Spiritual promotion, and was willing to give Money to purchase such Preferment, but went not to God but to *Peter*, who was but Gods Steward, not to sell, but dispose of, and dispense his Gifts as he appointed. Thus the Clergy-man is taken with Church Preferment, and is willing to give Money to obtain it, but he goes not to God, who is the proprietor of all Spiritual promotion, but to the Patron who is but Gods Steward, whom in Providence he hath entrusted to present fit persons to his house in a vacancy. If the Patron sells it, the Law of God charges him with Robbery, because by Gods Law it is none of his, and Humane Laws will force the Patron to present within a limited time, and that freely without any consideration, yet the Clergy-man goes to the Patron, who hath no right to sell it, and by this justifies the Patrons Thievery, breaks the Divine Law, and puts a cheat upon all humane Laws made against it. Suppose God should put the same question to such a Clergy man after institution and induction, as he put to the man that wanted the Wedding Garment. *Friend how camest thou*

thou in hither ? How camest thou to be Preacher in this place ? to be a Watch-man over this People ; to serve at my Altar ? To receive the revenue belonging to this Church ? Durst the Clergy-man plead any of these, I bought a Horse, I Seal'd a Bond, I actually or virtually bought the Presentation to this Benefice ? No, such would be as Speechless as that man was.

It were a great happiness to the Church, if every Patron had St. *Peters* Spirit, and when any Clergy-man tempts him with Money to present him, would say as he did to *Simon Magus*, thy Money perish with thee : but alas there are Patrons as ready to sell as the other to buy, they are like *Simon* and *Levi*, Brethren in iniquity, both of them sin deliberately against knowledge, perfidiously against trust, Hypocritically against their Profession, and secretly and with a kind of Hellish skill against all Laws both Divine and Humane.

But as there is a God in Heaven that knows what hath past between the Patron and the Clergy-man, so the time is coming when he will make it known he hath assumed this Title of being a God in secret, to assure us that as he knows, so he will make known the most secret frauds and closetted contrivances ; *Be not deceived, God is not mocked*, he will bring to light the most hidden things of darkness, those sins that have been hatched in Hell, shall appear above board in all their circumstances and aggravations, and then what shame and confusion will cover such when they consider what they have done and what they must suffer.

If then you would not render the Church contemptible, and destroy all hopes of preferment in a regular way, if you would not give an universal offence to all (except the corrupt Patron and the Devil) be not entangled with this sin, but carefully avoid it, that the Ministry be not blamed.

2. The second thing wherein a Minister of the Gospel is liable to give offence, is in the negligent, careless, and gross omission of the manifest duties belonging to his Office. such are reading and studying of the holy Scriptures, publick Prayers, and Preaching of the Word, the due administration of the Sacraments, as also Catechising those that are young, convincing gainsayers, defending the Truth against all opposers, executing Gospel Discipline in his place, visiting the sick, and burying of the dead, and such like Offices to omit any of these in a careless negligent manner is (*απορρονη*) an offence; the crime laid to the charge of those Priests of old was, *Mal. 2. 9. They were partial in the Law.* It would not

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comport with their Carnal Ease and Worldly interest, wholly to cast off all duties, nor wholly to perform them, and therefore they served God in a Figure, gave him a part for the whole, they set not themselves, nor were constant to every part of their work, but suffered many Religious Duties to run into one, to the excluding of such other as ought to have been performed. Some make Preaching and Hearing all their Religion, and the Prayers of the Church are omitted and excluded, others are all for Prayers, and neither regard Preaching nor Hearing; these extremes are an offence; But I will instance in one Duty for Brevities sake, which may suffice in this matter, and that is the omission, or at least the long intermission of administering the Lords Supper, which hath of late been such in our Church, as scarce hath been since the first institution of that blessed Ordinance; and however the great reverence of some persons guilty of this neglect, made it seem less scandalous in the Eyes of many, and the fault was covered over with some specious-pretences, yet it was a very dangerous stumbling block, giving occasion to many not only to neglect that solemn memorial of the Death of their Saviour, but to live and dye in the neglect, (if not in the contempt) of that Blessed Sacrament, to the great hazard of their Souls. Besides it bred an opinion in many of the non-necessity of Eating the Flesh and Drinking the Blood of Christ Sacramentally, and some were so bold, as openly to profess that the danger, was great only in unworthy receiving, but no danger at all in not partaking of it, and this brought such a Spiritual frost upon the affections and devotions of some Christians, as will require some pains to thaw, and rekindle that hearty Devotion, high reverence and longing desires which ought to be in all towards that Heavenly food of their Souls, and thus it may be said of any other duty appertaining to the Ministry, the gross and careless omission of which may not only draw a Woe from God, but become an offence to men.

3. The third thing wherein a Minister of the Gospel is liable to give offence, is when he performs his Office with such a rude irreverence, light indecency, and such manifest unsuitable unworthiness as betrays the holy things wherein he Ministers to contempt, among such as are Prophane, and to the grief of such as are truly Pious, even as *Elias* Sons by their rude ministration caused men to abhor the offering of the Lord. Though Ministers are in a peculiar manner Gods Servants, and immediate attendants, that do not only approach (but in a sense represent) his person, yet they ought

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to know and keep their distance in all their approaches to him, and when they draw nigh to the high and lofty one, they ought to be clothed with humility, his excellency should make them afraid, and his dread should fall upon them.

In acts of Divine Worship Ministers should not only call upon others, but joyn with them in the words of the Psalmist, *Psal. 95. 6. O come let us worship, and bow down, and kneel before the Lord our Maker.*

There ought to be in all Divine Ministrations (an *εὐσέβεια*, and an *ἀξία*) a decency and worthiness, these for the most part go together, and where either or both these are wanting, there is an offence given, and if the *Corinthians* were blamed by St. Paul, and punished by God himself for behaving themselves (*ἀνεξέτως*) unworthily in partaking of the Lords Supper, surely the sin of a Minister performing his Ministration unworthily, or unbecomming the Holiness of such services, is much more blame-worthy both from God and Men; he that designs to serve God acceptably, he must do it with Reverence and Godly fear, *Heb. 12. 28. that the Ministry be not blamed.*

4. The fourth thing wherein a Minister may give offence, is, when he depresseth the honour of Preaching, by making it stoop, and baffling it with the Lyrurgy, the bare reading of the Scripture, and the Homilies of our Church set out by Authority.

There is no part of the Ministerial Office more weighty than Preaching, or Explaining and Interpreting the sense of Scripture by Scripture, in an authoritative way, to the use of the hearers, in order to the glory of God, and their present and future Happiness. This is that Ordinance which the all-wise God hath devised and appointed to save Souls; it's as a golden Net let down from Heaven, to fetch Souls thither; it's the Chariot of the Holy Ghost, in which he makes his progress from place to place in this World; it's such an Ordinance as all the Miracles of Christ and his Apostles were attendants to it: Yet no Ordinance hath been more abused by some, nor undermined by others, and, which is worst of all, it hath been undervalued by some who have pretended to be its Friends, and have arrogated to themselves the Title of being the true Sons of the Church, and have been obliged many ways to keep up its honour, yet even these have depressed the honour, and endeavoured to weaken the power of it, and that four ways.

1. By questioning whether it be a **Worship** of God properly so call'd; they look upon it to be one of the meanest Ordinances of God, and think God might be worshipped well enough without it,

and therefore have been so bold as to preach down Preaching, and have entred this query, whether Preaching be (*Cultus Dei proprie dictus*) a Worship of God in a proper kind of speech. In answer to which I demand, what reason can be given but that an obediencial act (*in rebus sacris*) in holy things, performed immediately to God for the honour of his name, should be properly a Worship of him; but Preaching is such an act, &c. Preaching in a mystical sense, is sacrificing and offering up of the Souls of the People; and as the Souls of Christians are the most acceptable Sacrifices to God, so before they be offered, they must be (as it were) slain, mortified, and the blood of natural corruption let out.

The Word of God is to them as the Sacrificing Knife of the Priest, and the Preaching of it is like the Priests applying it to the use of Sacrificing: Therefore Ministers in Preaching of the Gospel, offer the best Sacrifices, and most acceptable Oblations unto God; in which kind of speech St. Paul saith, he was a Minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministring the Gospel of God, *Rom. 15, 16*. That the offering up (or sacrificing) of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost. But that we may not ground our proof too much upon allusions and metaphors, we will make it evident in plain words, that Preaching of the Word is (*Cultus Dei proprie dictus*) a Worship of God in a proper sense.

Let it be considered, that all the parts of Publick Worship are not to be considered as acts performed by the Minister alone, but as they involve and carry along with them the acts of the People, and so make together one Service of the whole Congregation adoring God. Let Preaching be thus considered as it is accompanied with the relative acts of the People; and let the whole Divine Service of the Congregation (which is but one Body) be put into one Sacrifice, and then I hope it will be (*Cultus Dei proprie dictus*) a Worship of God properly so called.

For why should not an humble, submitting prostration of the Soul to God, when he speaks to us, be as proper an adoration of him; as an humble depending, or resigning prostration when we speak to him? If then our act considered alone, doth not deserve (which surely it doth) to be called (*cultus Dei proprie dictus*) a Worship in a proper sense, yet for the sakes of the peoples act, which is inseparable from ours, let altogether pass for *cultus Dei proprie dictus* without further queries.

2. By crying up and highly extolling the Lyurgy, or common Prayer, in opposition to it, some are very devout at Prayer, but care not for

for Preaching they lift up one to the disparagement of the other, and Prayer and Preaching which should be like the Flower and the Seed, that preserves and continues each other, are made by such extreams, to be like the two Buckets in a Well when the one goes up the other goes down. Now tho' I do not think it the part of a Dutiful Child, to make comparisons between his Father and his Mother, or to say which he loves best: yet if he be forced to speak of their several perfections, he may say (in case it be so) my Mother is the Lovelier and Fairer, but my Father is the Taller and Stronger, without any just offence or disparagement to either, so seeing I am in a manner forced to speak comparatively upon the several perfections of these two parts of our sacred Worship, the Lyturgy and Preaching both which, I Honour, as my Parents which begot, and bred me up to eternal life, and will not say which I love best; yet I hope there will be no just offence given or taken, if I say that the Lyturgy in some things hath her clear preheminance, and in other things Preaching hath her peculiar excellencies and excellencies.

It is true that the Lyturgy of our Church, hath this advantage that it is not subject to be defiled, or blemished with the rawness, rashness, rudeness, passionateness, and fastidiousness, of private Spirits, which things Preaching is more subject to; but then Preaching hath many peculiar excellencies to commend it, of which we shall speak afterward, in the mean time tho' natural affection incline some Children to love their Father best, and some their Mother, yet if true Religion cause them to give both their due honour, it is no striving against nature in this; so if some obedient Children of the Church be more inclined in their affections, unto Preaching, and some to Prayer, yet it's not worth the striving, if the force of true Religion doth cause them to give due honour and reverence unto both.

If this satisfies not to cure this extream of setting up one part of worship to pull down another, and magnifying the Prayers of the Church above Preaching, I shall in few words stop the mouth of any (who have the least spark of true Christianity in them) from so much as lifting up the least thought against Preaching of the Word.

If Preaching begin to grow into disesteem with us upon Earth, tell me (I pray) what welcome you think our Prayers will find in Heaven? If we neglect or slight Gods word delivered to us, can we think he will regard our Prayers offered to him? no, himself hath

hath said, *Prov. 28. 9. He that turneth away his Ear from hearing of the Law, even his Prayer shall be abomination.*

3. By declaring that the bare reading of the Holy Scripture is the best Preaching, and sufficient without any explications, or comments to edify people to Life and Salvation. It is true the pure Word of God, read with reverence and as it ought, hath done and may do much good, and in a large sence (as it is a declaration of Gods will) may be called Preaching. But in a strict and proper sence Preaching is something more than bare reading: Who can think that when our Saviour sent his Apostles to Preach, he meant no more than the bare reading of such Scripture as was then written? or that when St. Paul said, *Who is sufficient for these things?* He meant no more than, who is sufficient to read these things? or when he exhorted *Timothy* rightly to divide the word of truth, he meant no more than the bare reading the word of truth? or when he so Fatherlically charged him before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ to Preach the Word, to be instant in season, out of season, and to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine, *2 Tim. 4. 1.* That he meant no more than bare reading? But rather an opening and explaining of Scripture to the edification of the hearers. And altho' for purity of Truth and Authority, Reading may far excel Preaching, yet for accommodate fitness for the edification of the Church; right Preaching (tho' but weak) may go beyond it; it is no good rule that whatsoever is best is alwaies fittest, for Gold is the purest of all Metals, yet Steel for the use of cutting excels it. The Scripture compares the Word of God to an Axe, and the Ministers work about it, may be compared to putting of a Wooden Helve into it, and sure none will say, that the Axe alone cuts better without the Helve than with it; I appeal to the Consciences of all, whether the Word of God, doth not commonly and ordinarily strike with deeper impresses, and more powerful convictions upon mens Minds and Consciences, when it is helved with the Ministers Expositions, Illustrations, and pressing Applications, than when it's barely read.

And if any think this derogates from the Word, to set it forth to be but as an Axe without an Helve, I reply that the Wisdom of God did never intend that the Word alone should be sufficient, and perfect enough to build up the Church without the Ministry of men, and therefore he hath put no such perfection into the Word alone, but as he hath given the Axe, so he hath given the Helve also, I mean such as Labour in the Word and Doctrine, which

which must by no means be slighted or neglected, for as the old Proverb is, *Helve after Hatchet*, so if we cast away the Helve (I mean the right Preaching of the Word) I fear the Proverb will be true the other way, *Hatchet after Helve*.

4. By insinuating and perswading that there needs no other Preaching, (after Prayers and Reading of Scriptures) but reading of the Homilies of our Church, and these are cryed up to be the best and most excellent Sermons, and he is no right Son of the Church that useth any other Sermons, except upon some extraordinary occasions.

It's true the Homilies of our Church are Grave Comments, sound and good expositions upon some select parts of Holy Scripture and the reading of these is good Preaching, and I heartily wish it were more used, provided it could be without scandal, which people generally cast in our Teeth, that we make use of them more out of laziness, and sloath, than out of any desire of their edification and Salvation.

The truth is the Homilies and Articles of our Church are Bulwarks and Trenches of our Religion that will better uphold it, than thousands of our Sermons ; but yet for edification of a particular congregation a discreet Sermon made by a painful Pastor framing his Speech more nearly unto times, places, persons, occasions and circumstances may excell one of our Homilies, yea the judgment of our Church is so, seeing she leaves out the Homily in her publick service of God for the sake of the Sermon.

If any think this is Pride to prefer the Judgment of a private Pastor before the Judgment of the Church, as if he could see better what is fit for the edifying of the People than the Church.

answer ; There is no question, but their knowledge and judgment is to be preferred before any Private mans in some things ; but the case is thus ; as a weak-sighted man standing near an object, may better judge of that particular object, than the most quick-sighted man in the World standing at a further distance : So the Homilies which look upon this and that Parochial Congregation at so great a distance, may sometimes fail of the fitness which the discretion of a Parochial Pastor may contrive by his own pains and industry.

Besides, the Church had no design in the setting forth of her Homilies to out-go the perfection of her Ministers, but to supply their wants ; and it is no dishonour to the Church, if sometimes, and in some cases their Preaching be preferred before hers. But to conclude ; God's Preaching in his Word is much better than ours ;

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but it's too high for the People, without an Interpreter. The Churches Preaching in her Homilies is of more authority than ours; but her gravity will not easily master the dainty and coy Ears of our Times: And besides, she hath so few Sermons, that our Times (which must be fed with variety) would soon grow weary.

And therefore when all is said that can be said to undermine the honour of sound Preaching, by comparing it with the Lyurgy, the bare reading of the Scriptures, and the grave Homilies of our Church, yet after all, it holds, and will hold this honour inviolable, that it is a prime fundamental and standing Ordinance of God, a most beautiful Watch-tower in the midst of God's Vineyard. The generative faculty whereby one Church begets another, (which in the sensitive creature Philosophers call the noblest faculty) the chief Instrument whereby Christ gathers a Church to himself, it's that concerning which our blessed Saviour (upon the bond of his Love) gave St. Peter a threefold charge, *feed my Lambs, feed my Sheep, feed my Sheep*: It is that which Christ gave in Commission to all his Apostles, yea, the first thing in it *Matth. 28. 19.* It's that Ordinance which all the Miracles of Christ and his Apostles were Servants to; and is that a mean Ordinance, which for a long time in the Primitive Church was so nobly attended with Glorious Miracles, and still is attended with Spiritual Miracles, giving sight to men Spiritually blind, and raising up men dead in sin, to the love and liking of Godliness. The Conversion of a Soul is a Miraculous work, and we find no less than 3000 converted by one Sermon, *Act. 2. 41.* what a Miracle was this to see 3000 dead men that could neither see, hear, speak nor so much as feel, all raised to life, 3000 Rebels made Loyal Subjects and all this effected by one plain and powerful Sermon; besides all this, the publick acts and constitutions of our Church, do so highly dignify the Honour of Preaching, that it is either some ill affection, or disobedience, or both, to our Church, that causes any to depress the honour of it, and to make a confusion among such parts of Gods Worship as our Church hath orderly and inseparably joyned together, what offences have been given by thus doing, experience will fully inform any that desires to know.

5. The fifth thing wherein a Minister of the Gospel is liable to give offence is, by sowing or cherishing the Seeds of Schism, Division and Separation, when he plants such principles in the minds of people, as afterward serve them as a Crab stock to graft Schism upon,

upon, tho' he do it not with his own hands, yet upon occasion they will do it themselves; The Scripture doth expresse Schism, by causing divisions, by men separating themselves, and forsaking the Assemblies, or going out from the Church, and by heaping up teachers, and drawing Disciples after them, in opposition to the true Church. I am very sensible by experience how little regard is given (by many) to any Minister whatsoever, who offers his assistance towards the healing or preventing of this disease, and if St. Paul were again on Earth, and should cry with his once compassionate earnestness, *Rom. 16. 17. Now I beseech you brethren, mark them which cause (διχοστασις καὶ τὸ συνιδεῖν) divisions, dissensions, separation, and offences, contrary to the Doctrine which you have received, and avoid them.* It is to be feared he would find many ears stopt against it. But observe how he joyns divisions and offences together as if they were one and the same, or as if one were productive of the other; and if any Nation under Heaven have seen and felt what sad offences Church divisions have proved, sure we have had experience enough to make us both wise and humble. Are not divisions offences to them that are without the Church, to hinder them from coming in? Are not divisions offences to those that are within, to stumble the weak with needless scruples, to harden the profane, to deaden the Hearts of formal Christians, and to make them careless of Religion? Do not divisions, rents and separations increase Atheism and Idolatry, and hinder the peace, comfort and edification of all in general?

Our opinions in matters of Religion have been many, we have been divided and subdivided, but doubtless our divisions had never grown to that height, if the rank and poysonous seeds of schism had not been thick sown by some Ministers of the Gospel, and the fire kindled by this offence is not easily quenched. I could give an instance of a learned and famous Divine who had out of a blind zeal sown such seeds. but afterwards saw his error and repented, & gave testimony of the truth of his repentance by endeavouring to the utmost of his power to reduce those he had misled, he openly declared that he had deceived them, and that he was sore perplexed for so doing, and was willing to take any pains, or undergo any shame, that he might reform them, but nothing he could say or do would avail to undeceive them, but he was left to bemoan his sin to his dying day; so hard it is to cure Schism when once the Seeds have taken Root. Sometimes the fire of Schism blazes not outwardly, but seems to be a little quenched; and sometimes it burns inwardly

more than appears, and upon occasion breaks out again; yet there is some hopes by the blessing of God this fire of discord may be quenched, and this is one means to do it, that the Ministers beware of sowing the Seeds of division, that the Ministry be not blamed.

6. The sixth thing wherein a Minister of the Gospel is apt to give offence is, in the abuse of his Christian liberty; of such offences St. Paul speaks largely, *Rom. 14.* and *1 Cor. 10.* the sum of what he speaks in both places amounts to thus much. That when any Christian who hath free choice to do or not to do a thing, which of it self is lawful, yet knows that by not doing it he shall offend no man, but by his doing it he knows he shall offend his weak brother, by laying a stumbling block before him, or as the Apostle expresses it by grieving his weak brother, *Rom. 14. 15.* (ὁ ἀδελφεὸς οὗ ἀνομιῶται) if thy brother be grieved with thy Meat; If in such a case a Christian, much more a Minister doth not forbear to use his Christian Liberty, he offends the rule of Charity; now (saith the Apostle) walkest thou not Charitably, destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died. Christ hath purchased a Liberty for his people, and bids them stand fast in it, but it must be used for a Cloak of maliciousness, as St. Peter speaks, *1 Pet. 2. 16.* *As free, not using your liberty* (ὡς ἐπαχλυμὸν τῆς ἐξουίας) *for a Cloak or cover of wickedness, but as the Servants of God.* If we consider the precedent verses to which these words have an apparent reference, we shall see what particular the Apostles aims at in this prohibition, the words in the 13, 14, 15. verses are these; *Submit your selves to every Ordinance of man* (that is, to every power lawfully constituted) *for the Lords sake, whether it be to the King as Supream, or unto Governours as unto them that are sent by him, for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well, for so is the Will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, is that, of such men as speak evil of the Christian Faith, as if it principled the Professors thereof to be refractory against humane Laws, or disobedient to Governours, then follow these words, As free, and not using your Liberty for a Cloak of maliciousness* (or as the word (ἐξουίας) signifies, wickedness of any kind) by which is understood the wickedness of disobedience to Governours, seeing the Apostle calls obedience to Governours *well-doing*, and imposed on them by the will of God; use not your Liberty to countenance the least disobedience to Governours in Families, Church or State. I thought fit to open these two places of Scripture more plainly, because the former doth most favour the popular way of arguing and hath been made use of by

by many as a Vail or Cloak of Separation, the Truth is, the best and most ancient Writers thought it to be only an act of of Apostolical care for such weak and sickly ones as he there speaks of, and therefore such as pervert, corrupt, or deny the Faith may not make use of it, nor expect such compliances, lest it confirm them in their error, and encourage others to the disturbance of the Church. This is certain that true charity to mens Souls, will cause all men to abstain from such actions as are purely indifferent in themselves, and no way enjoyned by authority, and rather than practise any thing that may cause another to commit sin, to deny themselves the use of their Christian Liberty.

The latter Text I have opened hath not been so well understood in the Coherence as it ought, and because many have pretended their Christian Liberty, not only as a Cloak to excuse, but as a shield to justify their disobedience to lawfull Authority, the Scribes and Pharisees made use of it to cover all the affronts and indignities they acted towards Christ, and we know the Gnosticks made use of it to cover the vilest principles and practices, and as no doctrine is more pleasant than that of Christian Liberty, so none hath been more abused to the scandal both of the Gospel and the Professors of it. The example of our Lord to this purpose is considerable, who when he was demanded to pay tribute, did not make use of his Liberty to exempt him from Obedience to Authority, but works a Miracle to pay his Tax, and it was upon this ground, *Matth. 17. 27. Notwithstanding lest we should give them offence, &c.*

Tho' he was free, and the power Tyrannical, yet lest he should Minister any matter of offence, to those in Authority, or give any example to others to do so, he will deny his Liberty, and sure all sorts of Christians, especially Ministers, ought to follow this bright example, be very careful lest they should abuse their Liberty by making it a Cloak for their disobedience to Authority, and if great care be not taken herein, they will not only give an offence to their lawful Superiours, to whom it is the Will of God men should yield Obedience, but to Equals and Inferiours also, in whom they will nourish the Seeds of disobedience, hardning them in their refractoriness, and framing their Spirits unto that crookedness and stubbornness, which the corrupt nature of man is too much inclined to, (that is to say) rather to follow his own will and fancy, than to obey the Wisdom and Authority of any Governours in Families, Church or State.

7. The seventh thing wherein a Minister is liable above others

to give offence is, in his words and speeches of private communication and discourse, when he grossly offends against those holy rules of speaking prescribed in Gods Word, and to be carefully observed by all Christians, much more by Ministers, whose Tongues should be as Trees of Life, and whose Lips should feed many. Ministers are subject to infirmities, and to temptations as well as others, and they have many eyes upon them to spy out, aggravate and publish their faults, and therefore have need more than others, to purpose with King *David*, that their Mouth shall not offend, and to take heed to their ways, that they offend not with their Tongue. *Psal.* 39. 1. Their private discourse should be spiritual, ever favouring of Holiness, and endeavouring to instill some sutable and seasonable good into all as occasion serves; many have been won to a love of Religion by such pious discourses as have dropt occasionally from the mouths of some Ministers. But when the Ministers discourse is corrupt and hath nothing in it, which is good to the use of edifying, as when their words are idle, vain, frothy, and impertinent, or proud, haughty and scornful, or full of bitterness, spite and malice, or are earthly, sensual and devilish, or when they sow discord, strife and contention, by tale-bearing and defaming, or when there is any filthiness, or foolish talking, or jesting in their speeches, which are not convenient, and most of all when they are noted for common Swearers, Curfers, or Blasphemers, and in brief, all words which are within the compass of the Apostles reproof and caution, *1 Cor.* 15. 33. *Be not deceived Evil Communications corrupt Good Manners*, whatsoever speeches do either bewray bad manners in the speaker, or corrupt Good Manners in the hearers, are offensive to God and all good men.

To be guilty of such Tongue Evils is bad enough in private Christians, but worse in a Minister and where ever it is, it argues two things dismal to consider. 1. A corrupt filthy heart, yea that corruption is very strong in the heart, seeing it hath got the command of the Tongue, *Matth.* 12. 34. It argues the house is full of smoak within, when it breaks out at the Doors and Windows, the Heart is the House where good and evil dwells, and the Mouth is as the door by which it vents it self, for out of the abundance of the Heart the Mouth speaks.

2. That the Religion of such is nothing worth, *Jam.* 1. 26. *If any man among you seem to be Religious and bridleth not his Tongue, but deceiveth his own heart; this mans Religion is vain: His Faith, his Hope, all his supposed Graces, and all the pains he has taken in duties,*

duties is vain, and of no effect, in point of acceptation with God here, or Salvation hereafter, the man of God must carefully avoid this offence, lest the Ministry be blamed.

8. The eighth thing wherein a Minister is liable to give offence is, in his vicious life and conversation; this in all Christians of what rank or degree soever is an offence, but much greater in a Minister, because that if his Doctrine be not as corrupt as his manners, he must needs condemn himself out of his own mouth, *Rom. 2. 21, 22, 23, Thou therefore that teachest another, teachest thou not thy self? Thou that Preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit Adultery, dost thou commit Adultery? Thou that abhorrest Idols, dost thou commit Sacrilege? &c.*

Thou that proclaimest the wrath of God to be revealed from Heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness, art thou ungodly and unrighteous and dost thou imprison the truth in unrighteousness? Thou that persuadest others to walk in the strait and narrow way of self denial and mortification which leads to Life and Salvation; Dost thou walk in the broad and wide way of Sensuality and Self-indulgence which leads to Death and Damnation? Thou that Preachest woe and wrath to all Atheists, Epicures, Drunkards, Hypocrites and Profane persons, who live in the omission of known duties, and in the commission of known sins, art thou an Infidel, an Atheist, a Dissembler, an ungodly Wretch, and livest in a state of Wickedness? Dost thou exhort others to put on the whole Armour of God, that they may be able to resist and conquer the World, the Flesh, and all the Infernal Powers of Darkness, and dost thou put on the whole Armour of Satan, Atheism, Unbelief, Misbelief, Spiritual Pride, Hypocrisy, Avarice, and other Hellish sins, and upon occasion fight Satans Battles against God and Goodness? and thus it may be said of any duty that such Preach to others, but will not practise it themselves.

This offence is so gross and visible, that it renders the Ministry very odious, *Hophni* and *Phinehas* being scandalous in their Lives, made good and bad to abhor the Sacrifice of the Lord. *If the Salt have lost its savour, it's good for nothing but the Dunghill, (cujus vita despicitur, resbat ut ejus doctrina condemnatur)* truth it self loseth some of its credit when it's taught by one that hath none, a foul blot in a Ministers Conversation will pass for a consutation of his soundest Doctrine, *(vita Clericorum, est Evangelium Laicorum)* people are led more by example than by precept, and will give more

more credit to what they see, than to what they hear. To be Heavenly in Doctrine, and Hellish in Life, or to be a Saint in the Temple and a Beast in the Tavern, is so great an offence that none can for shame Patronize or plead for any that are guilty of it. The charge laid to such of old, was *Mat. 2. 8. ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the Law.* When Ministers depart out of the way of Gospel Ordinances and Scripture Holiness, they cause many to stumble not only at Religion, but at the Law it self, and at all the means appointed to make them happy, for why should any Minister think that his Exhortation should prevail with another that hath no influence upon himself? Or that he should perswade others to practise what he regards not? *St. Paul* gave good advice to this purpose, *1 Tim. 4. 16. Take heed to thy self, and unto thy Doctrine;* the former is as necessary as the latter the careless, loose neglect of himself would be sure to frustrate the design of his Doctrine, which was both to save himself and those that heard him.

But if there were nothing else to make Ministers ashamed of giving this kind of offence, this one consideration were sufficient, That those who are guilty of the same or greater evils, will loath and abhor them in Ministers. There is never a Hectoring Atheist, nor voluptuous Epicure, nor filthy Sodomite, or Swearing Ruffian, who makes a mock at the most notorious wickedness in themselves, but when they hear or see a Minister treading in their steps, speaking in their Dialect, and following their Example, will startle and be amazed as if they had seen some Prodigy, and how much soever they may seem to be pleased with their Company in their Health, yet cannot endure their presence when they are confined to their Sick-beds, they at all times scorn and deride them in their Hearts, and at some times they abhor their presence. Ministers have Souls, as well as others, and are bound by stricter Rules than others to be holy in Lip and Life, and to be an Example to their Flock, and they ought to be as careful of their Salvation and as fearful of their Damnation as other Men. But when they preach one thing to Mens Ears, and another to their Eyes, when they profess that they know God, but in works they deny him, and instead of being Examples of Vertue and Piety they become Examples of Vice and Impiety, then they highly provoke God, declare themselves Graceless, grieve good Men, harden bad Men, and give a just offence to all Men: See what the God of Heaven saith to such Preachers, *Psal. 50. 16. to the end. What hast thou to do*

do to declare (or preach) my Statutes, or that thou shouldest take my Covenant into thy Mouth ? Seeing thou hatest Instruction and castest my words behind thee. As if God should say to such, either live as thou preacheest, or leave off preaching.

9. The ninth thing wherein a Minister is liable to give offence, is, in the matter of his Doctrine, when it is not according to the Word of God, which is the Rule of Truth, and the great subject of all sound preaching. Our Saviour himself preached no other Doctrine, than what his Father commanded him, and the Doctrine which the Apostles were to preach, and all Nations were to observe, was, all things whatsoever Christ commanded them. And St. Paul did at once shew both his sincerity to God, and fidelity to Mens Souls when he said, 1 Cor. 11. 23. *For I have received of the Lord, that which also I delivered to you* ; he had neither through base fear under-spoken, nor through haughty pride over-spoken, what he had received, but had declared unto them the whole counsel of God, without any addition to it, or subtraction from it.

But when Ministers preach another Doctrine, which neither Christ, nor any of his Apostles ever taught, nor the Church of God ever received, or when they so pervert or misrepresent the Gospel, that all (except the Text) is in effect another Gospel, when they preach Lying Divinations, false Visions, and the vigorous Impulses of their own Spirits, and cry them up for the Dictates and Illuminations of the Holy Ghost, as the false Prophets did, or when they preach for Doctrine the Commandments of Men, as the Pharisees did. Or when they preach diverse and strange Doctrines, I mean diverse from, or strange to all, or any part of Gods Word, or when they preach Doctrines of Devils, that is such Doctrines as the Devil suggests and approves of : Or when instead of preaching the Faith once (and but once) delivered (not always delivering) unto the Saints, they broach, set on foot, or revive damnable and condemned Heresies contrary to the Faith, subverting the Souls of such as they should edifie, causing them not only to err from the Faith, but to be reprobate concerning it, till at last they utterly deny it.

This is the greatest and most dangerous offence that can be given by any Minister of the Gospel ; yet (Good God !) how little have many feared to do it in all Ages ? This is no new thing, for as the Apostle speaks, 1 Cor. 11. 19. *There must be also Heresies among you* ; as in all Ages past, present, and to come, God hath had, hath, and will have a Church who shall worship him aright, and walk before him in uprightness, so in this Church there have been, are, and

and must be dangerous Errors, and Damnable Heresies, that it may be known who are sincere, and have the Root of the matter in them, and who are false and fickle in the Truth. Tho the being of Heresie is a great Evil. yet it must be, as serving to try good Men, and to discover such as are bad. But if such offences must be, woe to that Man by whom they come, it had been better for him that a Millstone had been hanged about his Neck, and that he had been cast into the Sea better his Breath had been stoppt, than that he should be made the Instrument to Breathe upon, and Infect others with the Poyson of Heresie. Better he had been sunk into the bottom of the Sea than that he should sink himself, and others (that hear and believe him) into the bottom of Hell.

This offence how light soever it may seem to some, is far worse than any of the former, yea far worse than the scandal of a lewd, and vicious Life and Conversation ; and that upon these following Considerations.

1. Because the scandal of a lewd, and loose Life in a Minister, is so gross and visible that the weakest Christian may see and avoid it, even a Child may see and avoid a deep flow, (such is the scandalous Life of a Minister) when he sees a clear path, wherein he may move more safely ; Heresie is like a deep Pit, covered over with green Clovers, one would at the first sight think it the nearest, and cleanest way, and so may easily fall into it, and be swallowed up in it. The Eyes of Sence, and bare Reason can easily discern and fly from a Minister Drunk with Wine or strong Drink, but there must be Eyes of Faith to discern, and fly from a Minister who is Spiritually Drunk with Erroneous and Heretical Opinions, Heresie is spun with so fine a Thread, that few can discover it.

2. The scandal of Evil Conversation in a Minister, doth usually stay it self in narrow Bounds, spreading no farther than he is known, or the Report flies, but the scandal of Heresie suddenly takes wing, and flies from East to West, from North to South, and never rests, until it hath display'd it self from one Town, City, and Countrey, to another, throughout the whole World planted with Christianity.

3. The scandal of a Lewd Life is so notorious that it cannot easily be either excused or justified, it's rare to find any so vile as to stand up in the defence of his Drunkenness, Fornication. Adultery, Thievery, Extortion, or any such notorious wickedness ; even Nature it self blushes at the discovery, and hath not a word to say
in

in the justification of such Vices. But Heresie makes Impudent, and is ready not only to excuse, but to justify the most Spiritual Wickedness; *Elimas* the Sorcerer a Man full of all Subtilty and Mischief, a Child of the Devil, an Enemy of all Righteousness, and one that ceased not to pervert, corrupt and misinterpret the right ways of the Lord, *Acts* 12: 10. yet justified himself in the Face of *St. Paul*, and nothing on this side a Miraculous Judgment of God upon him, could put a stop to his wickedness. *St. Paul* discovers a sort of Heretical and Diabolical Preachers under this Character, *1 Tim.* 4. 2. *Speaking Lies in Hypocrisie, having their Consciences seared with an hot Iron.* The matter they preached was false, and they spake it with a false Heart, and perhaps might pretend Conscience, tho' it was cauterized.

4. The scandal of a Vicious Life in a Minister is much more easie to remove; the ordinary power and exercise of Ecclesiastical Discipline, vigilantly and duly Administred, may by Gods Blessing remove such a scandal, and either cure, or cut off the Author of it from the Church; but the scandal of Heresie is so strong and potent, that all ordinary means are too weak to suppress it, when it's sprung up and upon the Wing: This hath been a cure undertaken by Synods and General Councils, and many times even their Authority hath been too weak to secure the Neck of this *Hydra* from heading again.

What is said concerning the scandal of a Vicious Life in Ministers will excuse me from having the least design to extenuate it, by what is here said concerning the scandal of Heresie. Yet if any be ambitious to know what my designs were in this point. 1. It was to shew the greatness of the scandal of Heresie, that all might beware of it, and stand up in their places against it, as the most pernicious and destructive Evil both to Church and State. And, 2. To give a check to that preposterous Zeal of some Persons who are severe beyond the Bounds of Christian Charity and Compassion in punishing the scandal of Vicious Lives in Ministers, yet at the same time can permit, (or connive at) the scandal of Heresie, which is far more destructive to Religion, to the peace of the Church, and to the Souls of Men. What kind (or rather blind) Zeal is that which hates (as it ought) the Poyson of Toads, but cherishes and nurses the Poyson of Serpents and Adders? Who would have all Toads utterly destroyed, but would have Serpents and Adders preserved alive, where as one Serpent with his Poysonous Sting, is able to do more mischief than a Thousand Toads.

It would make one to tremble to think what an account those (who were clothed with power in Church and State) will be able to give, for suffering such Serpents and Adders to crawl about, not only in corners and Hedge-rows, but publickly in the open Streets and Markets, yea and in Pulpits and publick Congregations, to the disgrace not only of our Religion, and disturbance of our Peace, but to the hazard of Damnation to many thousand Souls. If those who are Heads in Families, Church and State, be guilty of all the wickedness they might have prevented or removed, by putting forth their power to punish and protect according to their Duties in their Places, what a fearful account will many be able to give that have sate still with power in their Hands, and suffered such Villany in Principles and Practices, as hath tended to bring all true Religion to the Block. But I leave such *Galilios* in the State, and *Laodiceans* in the Church to answer him who gave them power, and expected they would have employed it for him, not against him, and let us conjure all Ministers of the Gospel as ever they will be able to see Christ to their Comfort, that they beware of broaching or reviving any Damnable or Condemned Heresie, that the Ministry be not blamed.

10. The last thing I shall Name wherein a Minister of the Gospel is liable to give offence, is in the manner of his officiating, when he conforms not to the Rule given by St. Peter, 1 Pet. 4. 11. *If any Man speak, let him speak as the Oracles of God*; he must not only speak Oracles for the matter, but in such a manner as becomes such Divine and Heavenly Records. *Some preach Christ out of envy and strife, and some of good will, Phil. 1. 15.* They both preached Christ but not from the same Principles, nor in the same manner, nor to the same end.

It were easie to enlarge upon this Head, but I design brevity, and shall only suggest in few words wherein an offence may be given this way.

1. When he doth not officiate with that plainness, both of words and method that becomes an Interpreter of Gospel Mysteries, fitting his Discourse to the Capacities of the Hearers, and gratifying their Memory by chusing the most natural, and plain method, in delivering the Truth to them,

2. When he doth it not with that Truth and Fidelity that becomes a Steward in Gods House, entrusted with precious Truths and precious Souls.

3. Nor with that tender Affection and Compassion that becomes a Spi-

a Spiritual Father, and Careful Shepherd, over the Family and Flock of Christ.

4. Nor with that Wisdom and Discretion, that becomes such as should win Souls, and distinguish and make a difference between Saints and Sinners, and the degrees of both, that he may feed his Flock with suitable Food.

5. Nor with that holy boldness which becomes a Soldier in the Camp of Christ listed in his Baptism, wherein he took the Oath of Supremacy and Allegiance, acknowledging Christ his Supreme Head, and promising Obedience to him, to fight under his Banner, yet wants Courage to draw the Sword of the Spirit, and Encounter the Sins of the Times and Places where he lives, and like a faint-hearted Souldier flies to some Garrison or Harbour for safety and shelter.

6. Nor so zealously and fervently as becomes one who should be a burning and shining Light to all about him, and should say with his Saviour, *The Zeal of thine House hath eaten me up.*

Lastly, When he is more concerned about Humane Traditions, than about Divine Revelation, and more Zealous for Outwards and Forms of Worship, than for the Inwards and Power of it, and presses Conformity and Obedience to doubtful and disputable Ceremonies, with more vigour than Conformity to the most certain, solid and uncontroverted Truths, and Bodily Worship, which profits little, with more earnestness than Godliness which is profitable for all things. I am verily persuaded that the Ceremonies themselves used in our Church, were not so offensive to many well-meaning Christians as to have them pressed with greater heat, than such Truths as are Essential and absolutely necessary to the very Being of Christianity; this is certain, that to bottom Religious Worship, upon Humane Authority, is in effect to blot out the Creed, and to live by sense.

There are many other ways might have been named, wherein a Minister may give offence, in the manner of his officiating, but these may suffice; we now come briefly to apply it, 1. To the Ministers, 2. To the People.

1. To the Ministers in general, they are all Christs Deputies, to reduce men to the obedience of the Gospel; it concerns them all from the highest to the lowest, to set their heads, hearts, and hands to this duty, and by how much the more any are entrusted with a fuller share, and higher degree of the Ministry, or doth more eminently succeed St. Paul in the Dignity of his Office, by

so much the more they ought to follow his example and tread in his steps; and here I would (in a humble manner) address my self to the Fathers and Governours of our Church, hoping they will entertain a modest freeness of Speech with an hearty welcome.

To you more is given, and from you more is required; To you it belongs not only to give no offence, that the Ministry be not blamed; But also to restrain and suppress, (by your authority) the offences given by others. It sufficed not old *Eli*, that he was a good man himself, the Scripture lays no scandal upon his personal conversation, but it was scandal enough in him, that having authority he restrained not his wicked Sons. You will give offence and the Ministry will be blamed, if you do not use your utmost power to take them away. Suffer me to allude to the Speech of our Saviour, *Math. 13. 41. The Son of man shall send forth his Angels, and they shall gather out of his Kingdom (*πάσαις ταις ἐνέργειαις*) all scandals, or all things that offend; ye who are the Fathers and Governours of our Church are called by St. John Angels; and as Christ makes use of Angels by nature, so he makes use of you who are Angels by Calling, and Title, to gather out of his Kingdom (or Church) on Earth, all scandals and offences that disturb the Church, overthrow the Faith and hazard mens Souls.*

It must be confessed our scandals and offences are many, wickedness is grown insolent, and so far as is possible bids defiance to all Law, yet by the blessing of God in the use of futable means, there is yet hopes, that offences may be either cured or cut off, especially if persons in places of Power, had but one Text of Scripture engraven upon their hearts, and would practise it themselves, and commend it to others, *Psal. 96. 9. The Zeal of thine house hath eaten me up. David* was not only a Christian, but a King, and a Prophet, and in all these capacities the Zeal of Gods house, Gods Ordinances, and Gods Worship had eaten him up, or devoured him, so that the chiefest of his thoughts, desires, and endeavours, did all run that way.

When our Lord and Saviour was upon Earth he twice purged his Fathers house from abuses, he could not bear it to see his Fathers House made a house of Merchandize, and a Den of Thieves; and as he was testifying his Zeal in reforming what was amiss, this Text was brought to mind, *Joh. 2. 17. his Disciples remembered that it was written, The Zeal of thine House hath eaten me up.*

When ever Providence shall order our highest and most honourable Court of Parliament (together with our right reverend Synod) to assemble to consult the affairs of our Church, and make provision

provision for the removing of scandals, and setting it in the power and purity of Religion, let the same Holy Spirit that brought this Text to their minds bring it to, and fasten it upon the minds of every one of them, *The Zeal of thine House hath eaten me up.*

Then there would be such Laws speedily made, openly proclaimed, and impartially executed, as would promote the interest of true Religion, and our Church would soon become beautiful as *Tirzah*, comely as *Jerusalem* and terrible as an Army with Banners, *Cant. 6. 4.* Then the dividing Schismatick, the turbulent Heretick, and all the incorrigible Sons of *Belial*, whose inward parts are very wickedness, would be either cured, or cut off, to the terror of evil doers, and the praise of them that do well.

Then every a Head of a family would act the part of a *Joshua*, and every Minister would be a Baptist revived, and every Magistrate, whether chief or subordinate, would stand up in their places, to set up true Religion, where it is not, to defend it where it is, and to reform it where it is corrupted.

Then our Church would flourish in its Revenues, in its Ordinances and in its true Worshipers, and be no longer tossed about with every Wind of Doctrine, but be settled in truth against error, in unity against division, and in peace against Enemies.

And this seems to be the fittest time, and most hopeful juncture for this great work, upon these considerations.

1. Our own experience of the woful effects of Divisions, in Families, Church and State.

2. The Providential works of God in taking away, and removing the chief Stumbling Block, which lay in the way of our settlement.

3. Our agreement in the substantial and fundamental parts of Religion. We all own the Bible to be the Standard of our Religion; The Creed is the sum of all our Faith, the Lords Prayer is the sum of all our desires, and the Ten Commandments as given and explained by our Mediator, are the sum of our practice.

Our differences are about Ceremonies and Circumstances, such as the Cross in Baptism, kneeling at the Lords Supper, bowing towards the Altar, and such like Gestures and Carbs, all which are but trifles if compared with those essential parts wherein we are agreed.

Ask a gifted brother why he undertakes the publick Preaching of the Word without a call? The answer of his Tongue would be, that he doth not refuse Ordination upon any account, but that in Conscience he cannot submit to the Ceremonies that attend it.

Ask

Ask such as are ordained why they Preach in Private Houses, and draw away hearers from the Church? they will answer, that they must Preach the Gospel, else wo to them, and they may not come into the Church without Conformity, which in Conscience they cannot do. Ask the People that follow such, why they leave their own Minister and Parish Church, to go to some Private House to hear a Stranger? and whether their own Minister be not as able to deliver and defend the Truth, as those they follow? The Answer will be various, some perhaps will say their Minister is a man of a lewd life, or weak parts, but the chief cause will be this, that he reads so much out of the Service Book, and uses so many Ceremonies, and is so Canonical, and Superstitious that we fear he hath a Pope in his Belly.

Ask some why they never administer the Sacraments? And others why they bring not their Children to holy Baptism, nor come themselves to the holy Communion? They will say they cannot with a good Conscience do these by reason of the Surplice, the Cross in Baptism, and Kneeling at the Sacrament, and some will not stick to call the whole of Church Worship Rags of Rome, and Relicks of Idolatry, &c.

Let a Conformist put off his Garb, and go to a Private meeting where he is not known, and Preach the same Sermon there, he had before done in the Church, the same Sermon that was slighted in the Church, shall be highly esteemed in a Conventicle. By all which it appears that our differences are not in Fundamentals and Substantials, but in Ceremonies and Accidents.

And if the Wisdom of our Law-makers, do find out a way, that nothing be imposed but things necessary, such as no man can scruple whose Conscience keeps within the bounds of Morality; and what they impose be universal, and the penalties annexed be impartially executed, there is no great fear but our disputes about trifles will soon vanish; and no dividing Schismatick, nor zealous formalist would have shelter under the shadow of these Ceremonies to divide us any more, especially if our Governours will out of their great Charity gratify such as have been misled with some compassionate accommodation, Canon 34.

Perhaps this freeness of Speech may contract a wrinkle upon some forehead, and I may seem to give offence, while I speak against it, To smooth such, and clear my self from suspicion, I have this to say.

1. That I am far from thinking the Fathers and Governours of our

our Church, stand in need of any thing I can say to mind them of their duty.

2. But what I have said is for the sakes of the People, that they may see we live not under such a Tyrannical power, but that we have freedom with modest confidence to speak our zeal and good affection for the welfare of our Church, according to our own apprehensions of things, and that there is in our Governours, not only a Patience, but a willing readines, yea perhaps a joy to hear and read us.

3. If therefore I have presumed, it is upon the greatness of their Wisdoms, the sweetness of their Charity, and the Sincerity of my own good meaning. And as *Job* (A great Prince) did not despise his Servants, when they contended with him, no more will they despise the meanest of their Servants speaking the words of truth and soberness. And now I will leave treading so near the Brink of presumption, and speak a few words to those of my own order in the Ministry.

Reverend Brethren,

2. The Ministry wherein we serve our Lord Jesus Christ is a service even to sweating: (as the Greek word signifies) and it will cost us some sweat to perform it aright; it is a work, a Divine and Heavenly work, a work full of labour, and difficult to perform: It will take up some of our time to understand it, but more of our study and care to practise it; we cannot deny, but must confess it is the duty of every one of us, yet to confess it our duty and not to practise it, is in effect to deny it. *Tit. i. 16.* and to declare our selves to be practical Atheists. What remains now but that we set our selves seriously to the study, and practise of this duty, of giving no offence in any of those things I have named, or in any other, that the Ministry be not blamed. And consider how many things do at once call us to this duty.

1. The honour of Christ our Lord and Saviour, which hath been blasted with so many Heretical and bold Blasphemies.

2. The honour of the Protestant Religion, which hath been scandaliz'd by many Doctrines and practices, contrary to its true principles.

3. The honour of the true Ministry of the Church of England, which hath been clouded with such contempt, and ought to be so dear and precious to us.

4. The healing of the Wounds and Breaches, with which our Church hath bled, and which yet are not well closed.

5. The

5. The Ripening of that happy and hoped for settlement of our Church into fruit, which is but yet in Bud and Blossom.

6. The care of our own Souls, and the Souls of the People committed to our charge, for which we are to be accountable unto our Lord.

7. The dismal effects that will follow upon the neglect of this duty, and that is, the Ministry will be blamed. All sorts of wicked men will (by way of biting censures, and scornful gestures) act the *Momus* upon the Ministry.

1. Then the politick and practical Atheist, who hath resolved his Religion into Humane Laws, will employ his wit and parts in calling into Question, the Author, the Foundation, the Rule, the Principles and Practices of all Divine Religion, and with a Tongue tuned by Satan, will call the Ministry, and all Ministerial Offices, a humane contrivance, and the carrying on of a trade.

2. Then the voluptuous Epicure, who makes his Belly his God, by making provision for the Flesh to satisfy (if possible) the Lusts of it, will cast Dirt upon the Ministry, and make void the Law it self to gratify his Lusts.

3. Then the turbulent Enthusiast, who is given up to believe a lye, will call the holy Scripture a dead Letter, and pretend to have a light within, which hath cast a Vail upon all stated Worship, and none need any other Preacher or Scripture, than the Light within.

4. Then the dissembling partial Hypocrite, who neither seems what he is, nor is what he seems, will upon occasion turn bitter Enemy to that Minister and Ministry that confronts his Lusts.

5. Then the Zealous Formalist, whose Religion is only a bodily Worship made up of Cringes, Bows, Genuflections, and mannerly Gestures.

6. Then also the covetous Worldlings who mind Earthly things, and whose inward thoughts are that their Houses shall continue for ever, who mind, affect, and labour more for the things below, than for those above, will do as the Pharisees did when our Saviour told them that they could not serve God and Mammon, *Luk. 16. 13, 14.* (*ἑξαιμάρτησαν*) they derided, or blew their Noses at him ; thus all sorts of wicked men will act the *Momus* upon the Ministry.

3. Our next drift is to speak a few words to the People. You see what a weighty duty lies upon the Ministers, and we are willing to our utmost to perform it, yet we scarce know how to set one foot forward in it, but when we have done our best to give no offence in any thing, offences will be taken, and not only we shall be censured, but the Ministry will be blamed.

This

This is no new thing, but hath been the Lot of the best Ministers that ever the Earth bore, yea our Lord himself, the great President of preaching, who did no evil, nor was guile found in his Mouth, was not free from being reproached, and blamed, his Person, his Breeding, his Education, his Kindred and Followers, his Doctrine and Miracles, were all spoken against, *Heb. 12. 2. Consider him who endured such contradictions of Sinners.* He was stigmatiz'd with the odious Names of being a gluttonous Person, a Winebibber, a Friend of Publicans and Sinners, he was call'd a Liar, a Seducer, an Impostor, a Samaritan, a Devil, and an Enemy to *Cesar*, his Offices of King, Priest, and Prophet, were all Blasphem'd, the Doctrine he Taught was traduced as the Nonsensical Babbles of a Rude and Illiterate Person, and those stupendious Miracles he wrought to confirm the Truth were Censured to be the effect of a Black Confederacy he had with Hellish Powers, yet none now will have the Face to say that ever he gave any offence in any thing, or to any Person.

By all which it's evident that there is a general proneness and inclination in all men by nature (or so far as natural) to blame the Ministry, I will not justify my self, nor any other, as altogether blameless, yet the readiness, and forwardness of people to blame and traduce our Ministry, and us as Ministers (as if they took a delight to shoot their Arrows at such Marks rather than at others) may not only be a great sin, but may be a great hindrance to their Conversion here, and to their Salvation hereafter.

And how ordinary and common soever it is for some to censure all Ministers, for the faults of some, and to wrest their faults upon the Ministry it self, yet never any got any benefit to himself by so doing, nor did any good to others; and it were a vain thing for any to think they can pull down, or banish the Ministry out of the World, it is a Divine work, and must stand to the end of the World, and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it, let Satan appear in what shape he will, in the Serpent, in the Dragon, in the Lion, or in an Angel of Light, and let all the wicked men on Earth joyn with him, yet all the combined policy and power of Men and Devils cannot effect it. Others have attempted this Hellish Work, who have had stronger Bodies, greater Estates, been mightier in Power, and longer Lived than any now can hope to attain to, have found by woful experience that none ever hardned themselves against God and prospered, *Job 9. 4.* they have found Woe and Wrath, Death and Damnation to be the end of such practices.

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Where

Where there is such a readines to traduce the Ministers, and blame the Ministry it argues want of three things.

1. Want of Charity, for that thinketh no Evil, Charity will not suffer people either to accuse, or receive an Accusation against their Ministers without undoubted proof, *1 Tim. 5. 19. Against an Elder receive not an Accusation but before two or three Witnesses.* True Charity will not Censure, except it hath God and his Law to warrant it.

2. Want of Pity, and Compassion, people ought to pity their Ministers upon many Accounts, especially upon this that they must live and die under the blame of many, though they use their utmost care and endeavour to give no offence in any thing.

3. Want of Honesty and Justice, or not doing as they would be done to, suppose there are some of those who are common Hearers of the Word, that live in an Atheistical contempt of Piety, or an obstinate habit of Swearing, or a remorseless Drunkenness, or a Self-knowing Hypocrisie, or a wilful Lying, or a vast unconscionableness in Dealings, or the like notorious Sins, would you take it well from your Minister to Censure you all for Atheists, common Swearers, Drunkards, Hypocrites, Liars and Oppressors, or that they should blame Christianity it self, for the sakes of some few, that verbally profess it, but will not practise it? You cannot but conclude that your miscarriages do offend us, as much as ours can offend you, and if you would be offended at such rash and unwarrantable Censures in us, why do you do to us what you cannot endure we should do to you. The Text binds Ministers to give no offence in any thing, that the Ministry be not blamed, and there is another Text binds you as fully to give no offence to any Person that Christianity be not blamed, *1 Cor. 10. 32. Give none offence, neither to the Jews nor to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God.* This is spoken to all Christians of what degree or quality soever. If Ministers be bound to read, to preach the Word, to pray, to administer the Sacraments, to live holy Lives, and to do all the Duties belonging to their Office, sure people are bound to joyn with them, and to do their parts; seeing then you are liable in your places to give offence, as well as they, be so honest as to do as you would be done to.

What *St. Paul* said to the Church of *Corinth*, when he was designed to send them a Preacher, he saith to all those to whom Providence sends such a Teacher, *1 Cor. 16. 10. Now if Timotheus come, see that he be with you without fear, for he works the work of the Lord,*

Lord, as I also do. His meaning in general is, see that you give him such a reception, and such a protection as is suitable to his Person and Office, or more particularly see that he be with you without fear. 1. Of losing your presence, do not forsake *Timothews* who hath both Ability and Authority to work the Work of the Lord, and follow a Stranger that hath neither. 2. Of losing your Love and Respect, count him worthy of double Honour, let him have a room in your Affections, and esteem him very highly for the Works sake. 3. Of losing your Prayers, that God would open to him a Door of utterance, that the Word of God may have free course and be glorified, and that *Timothews* may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked Men, and discharge his Calling so, as to save himself and those that hear him. 4. Of losing his Labour; do not you by your unprofitableness and unfruitfulness cause your Minister to renew the complaints of the Prophets and Apostles, *Who hath believed our Report?* Or that he hath laboured in vain. 5. Of losing your Protection, against all those Enemies they meet with in the faithful discharge of their Duties, when *Timothews* cries aloud against the Sins of the Times and Places where he Lives, and lays the Axe to the Roots of Sin, he will put wicked Men into a fret, and fill them full of wrath and fury, and this will break out in doing what mischief they can against him both by Tongue and Hand, then people ought in their Places like so many good *Obadiahs* to protect them, and the Truths they deliver from the fury and rage of Implacable Enemies. 6. Of losing his Maintenance; when he hath done his utmost to feed your Souls, do not you force him to run into the World for a Livelihood, God hath ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel, *1 Cor. 9. 14.* and *St. Paul* charges this upon all Christians, *Gal. 6. 6.* *Let him that is taught in the Word, communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things.*

Thus you ought to treat the Ministers of Christ when they are sent to you; to afford them your presence, and your Ears, and some corner of your Memories is good, but not enough, for as the Meat in your Mouths will not nourish until it be taken down into the Stomach, no more will their Doctrine do you any good in your Ears, until it come into your Hearts; the precious Seed of Gods Word, will not grow in any Soil, but that of a good and honest Heart, *Matth. 13. 23.* and such Hearers we long for, that will not only hear those holy Lessons we teach with their Ears but believe them with their Hearts, and practise them in their Lives.

It never yet was the fate of the Clergy to be every one of them free from Miscarriages, yet the general worthiness of our English Clergy is such as may move all good Christians to thankfulness, and suppose here and there one may be pickt out from amongst us, who openly and shamefully contradict the Doctrine they preach by their Lewd and Scandalous Lives, yet a pious Soul (by hearing such preach in a convincing manner, and opening the Scripture plainly, and with Zeal and seeming Fervency) may gather that there is a Hand of God upholding the true Religion, and some Divine Majesty in the Truth, which awes that Man to preach it openly and plainly, tho' it quite overthrow the Credit and Reputation of his own wicked Life and private Conversation; a heavy Judgment will fall upon such Preachers, yet this good may be gathered from them.

And what if amongst those Preachers that are Learned and Pious there be some differences about some nice Points and Circumstances of Religion, yet seeing they all agree in the Fundamental Points of Faith, and Duties of Holy Life, our differences in the former is a good sign there is a certainty of Truth in the latter, and is also a good Argument why you should believe and practise such unquestionable Doctrines of Faith and holy Life as we are perfectly all agreed in.

To conclude, I beseech you deal plainly with us; are we honest Men, or are we Impostors? Are we Ministers of Christ, or Ministers of State Policy? We are willing to serve the State, so far as is consistent with Piety towards God, which is the foundation of all States felicity: But we claim a higher Calling, to be the Ministers of the Ever-living God, and not of Mortal Men, and we preach to you, as serving God, and not Men; the simplicity and sincerity of our Hearts may embolden many of us to say with *St. Paul*, *2 Cor. 5. 9. We labour that whether present or absent we may be accepted of him.* There is nothing in all this World that we are so ambitious of as Divine Acceptation, and we are ready to do, or suffer any thing to our power that Christ might see of the Travel of his Soul (among you our Hearers) and be satisfied. We lead you not blindfold by an Implicit Faith, you have the holy Scriptures to examine our Doctrine by; we drive you not on with Whips and Scorpions, or with Spanish Inquisitions, or the like Cruelties, if the way be not well beaten, but over-grown, we make it plain and passable, and many of us go before you to the best of our strength. And if you would have us to be offered upon the Sacrifice

fice and Service of your Faith, as *St. Paul* speaks, *Phil. 2. 17.* Have not many of our Glorious Predecessors and Blessed Martyrs been so offered? Have they not suffered Death in the cruellest way that Bloody Persecutors could invent in the defence of the Truth we preach? And so perhaps would many of us do, if God in Providence should call us to it.

Now if you will neither give credit to our Doctrine, nor to our Lives, nor to our Deaths, what shall we say, or what will be the end of such Unbelief and Impenitency? Shall I tell you what you do, and whither you will go, if you slight and neglect what we teach? You step out of Christianity into Natural Infidelity, then into Politick and Practical Atheism, and then into Hell.

If at any time we be brought to give Evidence in any Court, before a Judge or Jury, our Testimony upon Oath will readily be believed, because in charity they think we have sufficient understanding to know, and honesty to look well to what we speak, and will you prove more uncharitable Judges and Juries than they? Are we believed where and when we speak in our own Persons, and not when we speak in the Person of Christ?

Behold here our Hand is upon the Book, and by our Allegiance which we owe to God, and as He shall help us, and the Contents of this book, we speak the Truth to you, and so far as is necessary, the whole Truth, and so far as we are able to discern, nothing but the Truth.

This is as great an evidence of our sincerity as we can give, or as you can desire, and what remains but that all good Christians whether Ministers or People, would all make it their Joint Interest to allay and suppress all rash Censuring and envious Contending one with another, and shew themselves to be the Sons of Peace by studying, and following things that make for Peace. It must be confessed our Divisions are many, and there are none that will acknowledge themselves to be their Authors, but one Party lays them at the Door of another; it is high time therefore for all true Christians to lay to Heart the unaccountable Divisions among us, and to endeavour to their utmost in their Places to promote Methods of Reconciliation; and as this is possible, so the Scripture directs how to do it, and that is, 1. By Gospel Doctrine. 2. By Gospel Practice. 3. By Gospel Discipline. These are the ways and means that both Christ and his Inspired Apostles used to compose and suppress Divisions and Contentions where-ever they found them.

The

The first thing to be done is to preach and press the excellency, and absolute necessity of Gospel Charity, Unity, Peace and Concord; when our Saviour saw his Disciples in danger of falling into Contention, which should be greatest, he quieted them by preaching Humility, Self-denial, and condescension, by the Example of an Innocent Child, and when he was about to leave the World, fore-seeing the Troubles they would meet with, he gave this charge to them as the best Antidote against Divisions, *John 13. 34.* That they should love one another; and we find all the Apostles treading in their Saviours steps, composing the differences they met with in the *Roman, Corinthian, Galatian and Ephesian Churches*, by preaching and pressing mutual Love, Unity, and Concord, and this is without dispute the first, and best means to kill and keep out all that Ignorance, Pride, Singularity, Avarice, and all other Hellish Sins that have divided us. This is that Bond of perfectness that brings, and holds together all Relations of Persons in Families, Church and State, the Man after Gods own Heart spends a short Psalm in its commendation, *Psal. 133.* wherein he fronts it with a Note of Attention, as a rare and pleasant spectacle, and after he commends it by two Properties. 1. Good. 2. Pleasant: Then he Illustrates it by two Similitudes. 1. Oyl. 2. Dew. And list of all he rewards it with two sorts of Blessings. 1. Temporal. 2. Eternal. Unity in Judgment, Affections, and Practice is the great Blessing of Persons, Families, Churches, and Nations, it's call'd an old Commandment which was from the beginning, and our Saviour calls it a new Command. It's old in respect of the Lawgiver, and substance of it, it's new in that it was delivered in a new Form, and by a new President, and both these Titles given it, teach us this Lesson, that it ever was, and now is, and ever will be, the will of God that Christians should love one another. *St. Paul* spends a whole Chapter in shewing the absolute necessity, and the superlative Excellency of Charity, *1 Cor. 13.* And we find him making use of seven Arguments to perswade Christians to keep the unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace, by all which it is apparent how necessary it is for Ministers to preach, and people to hear, and both to practise this Duty, (especially at this time) this new and excellent Command should be pressed with new Desires, new Affections, new Arguments, and with greatest Zeal as the best way to put an end to all those Divisions, Quarrels and Contentions amongst us.

2. The next thing to be done is, that persons of all persuasions would

would live in the constant and joynt Obedience of such Truths as all agree in, and cannot but own, that whereunto they have attained, they would walk by the same rule, mind and follow the same things; *Solomon* sums up Mans whole Duty under two general Heads, *Eccles. 12. 13. Fear God and keep his Commandments.* The Prophet *Micah* sums up all under three Heads, *to do justly, and love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God, Mic. 6. 8.* And *St. Paul* sums up that Religion which will bring Men to Salvation to consist in three things; *living soberly, righteously, and Godly in this present World, Tir. 2. 12.* These contain the substantial parts of all our Duties to, 1. Our selves. 2. Our Neighbour. 3. To our God. Do not place your Religion in any thing short of the practice of such substantial Truths upon this ground, because nothing short of these will bring you to Heaven, in the practice of these consists the power and truth of Religion; and mark this well, such as make Conscience of such Duties wherein consists the power of Religion, are the Persons that only are taught how to submit to the Forms, and Ceremonies that are or may be enjoyed by Authority. Let every one of what persuasion soever do as *St. Paul* did, *Acts 24. 16. Herin do I exercise my self, to have always a Conscience void of offence towards God, and towards Men.* He that sets his Head, Heart and Hands to this Exercise will find but little time to dispute about Trifles.

3. The last thing to be done is. that both Ministers and People do submit to Gospel Discipline; this is one part of that easie Yoke and light Burthen which Christ calls all his Followers to take upon them, *Matth. 11. 29. Take my Yoke upon you, his meaning is, take my Yoke not only of Gospel Doctrine, and of Gospel Obedience, but of Gospel Discipline.* Our Lord himself while on Earth did more than once reform his Fathers House; and before his Ascension he did invest his Apostles and their Successors with a power of Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction which he called the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and tho' in the first planting and setting of the Church, the Apostles did occasionally make use of that extraordinary power given to them, in inflicting Corporal Punishments, and sometimes Death, upon notorious Offenders, yet afterward they proceeded commonly by Suspension, or Excommunication from the Communion of the Christian Church. And tho' this Ordinance hath been corrupted and abused, yet it must not be cast away *ab abuti, ad non uti* is no good Argument. The *Corinthians* did shamefully abuse the Lords Supper, yet *St. Paul* lays

lays it not aside, but reforms the abuses by bringing them to the first Institution, and so it ought to be in this case, neither the Church can be safe, nor her Communion comfortable without it. We have had sad Experience of the mischief of Toleration, or Liberty to be of any or no Religion; we have lived to hear Liberty of Conscience pretended for the vilest wickedness both in Principles and Practices; and to conclude, we have lived to see that which some have called Conscience to be in truth nothing else but Corruption, Credit, or Worldly Interest. Some are so vile, so habitually wicked, so wedded to these three, that they scorn and slight all methods of meekness, and therefore must have the rod of discipline to reform them, such are not to be permitted in the Church, *Rev. 2. 20.* These are the ways our Lord and his Apostles took to compose differences, and to antidote people against divisions, and all the Wisdom in this World cannot devise better. I had here prepared a discourse of Sacrilege, as it relates to time, place and revenue of publick Worship, these God hath reserved to himself, and requires from his people and without these Gods publick Worship cannot be rightly performed. Sacrilege wounds all these, and if some stop be not put to this bold sin, it will do in time what *Dioclesian* and *Julian* the Apostate would have done, the one Martyred the Ministers, and the other spoiled the Church of its revenue. I found the opening of this sin in all its parts, did so well the discourse, that it was fitter to be emitted alone than with a Companion.

Yet because something hath been spoken to the Clergyman I will speak something to such Patrons as have the right of Presenting to Benefices, but will not without something given or promised, one way or other; you might as well wring *Hercules* his Club out of his hands, as offer to get a Presentation under their hands without money; let a Clergy man be never so well accomplished with Learning and Piety, let him have a rational Head, a Learned Tongue, a Gracious Heart, and a Holy Life. None of these are argumentative to prevail; *qui caret argento frustra utitur argumento.* Not he who hath most Grace, but he that offers most Guineas is the man they'll send to the Bishop. It must be confessed that such Clergy men as come in this way into the Church, are guilty of many great sins, and if the Proverb be true (the resetter is worse than the Thief) their sin in buying is worse than his in selling. but then it ought to be considered that what the corrupt Patron wants one way he makes up another, by adding Sacrilege to his Simony,

ny, and that deliberately against his knowledg, perfidiously against his Trust, boldly against terrible threats, and dangerously against his own Soul.

When our Churches were built, and by the free-will offering of the Commons of *England* (together with the Gifts and Legacies of many Benefactors) the Tithes and Revenues were given to the Christian Churches, they were both set apart and by Prayers and other Divine Offices, Solemnly Consecrated and Devoted to God himself, for the maintenance of his Worship, and at the same time many dreadful Curses were denounced against any that should take away, or Alienate any part thereof to any private use. Then also some Person of noted worth, was made choice of and intrusted with the Advowson or right to Present to that Benefice, and all this has been confirmed by many Acts of Parliament, and thus our Churches that have escaped Sacrilegious hands and Simoniackal contracts stand to this day.

Those who at the first were intrusted with the Advowson or right to Present to any Church, were great Upholders and Benefactors to that Church, and hence they are called of old Patrons, Advocates, and Defenders of it, they thought no time, no labour, no cost nor pains lost, which they laid out that way, they made Religion their design, and sought out men of worth to promote it, and their great care was to present men of worth, fitted and qualified for so great a work; little did our pious Ancestors think that what they so freely gave to the Church, and so firmly settled upon it, and with so many Curses barred men from it, should ever have been devoured, taken away, bought and sold; little did the Patrons of old think of a Generation of Successors that should openly expose their advowsons, and trust to be sold; little did all, or any of them think, that any would be so vile, as to make themselves the inheritors of all the Curses of their Fore-fathers; who can express how odious such Patrons would have been had they lived in those days? And had exposed their Advowsons to sale, as one was lately in a publick Gazett. *Solomon* calls Sacriledge a devouring of that which is holy, *Prov.* 20. 25. It is a Snare to the man who devoureth that which is Holy, and after Vows to make enquiry. What God by his special command hath reserved to himself, or what is solemnly devoted to him, or what is solemnly devoted to him, is here call'd *That which is Holy*, because devoted to a Holy God; for holy uses, and to holy ends; the taking away of such devoted things; from the uses they were devoted, to a mans own private use, is called a

devouring of that which is holy, and to make enquiry how the Promise or Vow may be made void, or which way that which was given to Divine uses, may be taken to ones private use, this is call'd, a snare in allusion to hunters who set snares for Wild Beasts, it is the Devil that both Sets and Baits this Snare; he first suggests to the corrupt Patron, that it's no sin to sell a Presentation, and that he would be accounted the greatest Fool in Nature, to give away that for nothing that he may have a good sum of Money for, and there is no question but there are men that will some way or other give a valuable consideration for a Presentation. Then he suggests to the Clergy man, where there is such a living to be had and that it will be a livelihood for him, but the times are such that none can expect preferment without money, and that he had better to part with some money, than spend his days in his Study, and live useles and neglected, and dye unobserved. Thus the wary Devil Tempts them into his Snare which catches suddenly, holds surely, and destroys certainly, and thus such as will be rich (by Simony and Sacrilege) fall into Temptation and a Snare, 1 Tim. 6. 9. and of all Snares this is the worst, when the Soul is ensnared, and taken Captive at the Will of Satan; to Repent of this sin, and get out of this Snare is difficult, yet there is a peradventure God may (in the use of good means) give such Repentance, 2 Tim. 2. 25, 26. and then they will bless God their Souls are escaped as a Bird out of the Snare of the Fowler.

The Prophet *Malachy* calls Sacrilege a Robbing of God, *Mal.* 3. 8. *Will a man Rob God? yet ye have robbed me; but ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In Tithes and Offerings.* The Lord to shew the heinousness of this sin puts the question, *Will a man Rob God? Is there any man living on Earth, so vile and impudent as to Rob that which he Owns and Worships to be a God? The very Heathens will not do so to their Idol Gods, yet this wickedness is charged upon the Jews, and that by God himself, but they seem to deny the charge, and return the question upon him and say, Wherein have we robbed thee? the Lord tells them wherein; In Tithes and Offerings.* What Tithes are, and whose they are, by Original right, and special reservation may be seen, *Lev. 27. 30, 31, 32. all Tithes of the Land, of the Seed of the ground, of the Fruit of the Trees, is the Lord's, Holy to the Lord. — And every Tith of Bullock, and of Sheep, and of all that goeth under the Rod, the tenth shall be Holy unto the Lord.* Here we see that God himself is both the owner and proprietor of Tithes, the persons to whom God hath given the Tithes, are such as Minister

Minister about Holy things, such as labour in the Word and Doctrine, such as wait at Gods Altar, such as Preach the Gospel; these and none else can with a good Conscience receive them. The first born who Ministred in the Priest-hood for about 2500 years, were the first that received Tithes, after that the Levites received Tithes until the coming of our Saviour, and since that the Preachers of the Gospel have, or ought to have received them, for the Tithes being principally due to the Worship, and to the Ministers for the Worships sake, it follows that they who are qualified and call'd to do the Work of the Ministry, are qualified to receive the Tithes, yet still God keeps the Original right and special propriety in himself, and both Ministers, ought to receive them as from God, and People to pay them as to God, both ought to own him the proper proprietor, here the Jews failed, they thought their Robbery terminated on the Priests, and Temple, and went no further, but what they did against Gods Ministers, and house God takes to himself, and tells them they had robbed him. This is a very great sin, and if the Devil can be said to rejoyce to see men Rob and Steal from one another, how doth he delight to see men Rob Jehovah? And this is done by such as with-hold, or take away that which belongs to Gods house.

The Pharisees thought it no sin to swear by the Temple, or by the Altar, provided they did not swear by the Gold of the one, and by the Gift upon the other; but our Saviour discovered and declared against their Error, *Matth. 23. 20, 21. Who so shall swear by the Temple, swears by it, and by him that dwells therein.* May not this be applied to such as sell the Temple? Doth not he that sells the Church or place of Publick Worship, sell it, and him that dwells in it? Were not our little Churches devoted to God? Do they not bear his Name? Doth he not dwell in them? Is he not present there as much or more than he was in the famous Temple and sumptuous Altar at Jerusalem? Look upon our little Altars or Communion-Tables, and you may see Christ come, his Conception, Nativity, Doctrines, Miracles, his Life, Death, Burial and Ascension all accomplished; so that we need not doubt but God dwells in our little Churches, and if so, how do such Patrons be-fool themselves? they think they only sell a Presentation to the Temple, but by this Argument they sell him that dwells therein. The best Preacher that ever was on Earth was bought and sold for money, but it was done by a Judas, and the false Pharisees, and such as buy and sell God's House and Revenue for money, do in

effect the same thing. When our Lord was on Earth, and found a Mart upon holy ground, he made a Scourge of small Cords, and drave them all out of the Temple, *Joh. 2. 15.* If his Zeal was so hot against such as bought and sold in the Temple, how hot will it be against such as buy and sell the Temple it self?

Impropiators flie to Humane Laws to stop the mouth of Conscience, but corrupt Patrons cannot for shame plead any Law to excuse their sin. And let it be considered that *Ananias* and *Sapphira* might have pleaded more to have excused their Sacriledge than any corrupt Patron can pretend to. See the whole Story, *Acts 5. 1. &c.* The sum of it is, that they by joynt consent devoted a Possession to the use of the Church, and after sold it (as being fitter for the use of the Church at that time) and ought to have given the full price to the use it was devoted; but they, as *Solomon* speaks, made enquiry, both agreed to keep back part of the price for their own private use, and the rest they brought to the Apostles; the Apostle expostulates the case, and tells them the rise of all was from Satan, who first tempted them (and they had yielded) to commit Sacriledge, and after to cover it with a Lye; and that they had sinned against God, in taking from him what was devoted to him. This was the first Consecration made, and the first Sacriledge committed in the Christian Church after our Lord's Ascension; the punishment was sudden death; they straightway fell down and gave up the Ghost.

Yet these might have pleaded, 1. That they took away nothing, but what they first gave, but the corrupt Patron takes away what he never gave, others gave it, and it was in the Churches possession before he was born. 2. They took away but a small part of what they had given, they might have taken more, but he takes away all he can, and sometimes leaves the Church desolate. 3. They committed Sacriledge but once, and died for it, but he commits it often and lives. 4. They sinned not against so many Laws as he now doth. 5. They sinned more secretly; none but God alone knew or could discover them, but he sins openly in the view of all. 6. They had no example of so signal a punishment to prohibit them, but he sins, and takes no warning of so sad a Judgment, but persists in the sin that cost others so dear.

7. They spent some time, and took some pains in the sale of what they gave; might they not have pleaded, that though they gave their Possession, yet they gave not their Labour; and though they kept back part of the price, it was but a just requital for the labour

labour and charge they had been at about it. Shew me a corrupt Patron can plead thus much, and if he could, it would no more excuse him, than it did them; it was part of their Christianity (and is part of mans) to have been faithful in this concern about all, which hath so near a relation to God, to his House, and to the Souls of men.

The trust which Providence hath reposed in Patrons, is of vast consequence, not only the Church (or publick place of Worship) but the honour of God, whose Name is there Recorded, yea the Worship it self, and the Welfare of all the Worshippers, may be said in some sense to depend upon the Faithful discharge of his duty; if he be true to his trust, he honours God, promotes Religion, rejoiceth all good men, and embalms his own name in both Worlds, but if he be perfidious, he makes the Church contemptible, by exposing it to Sale for Money, he highly provokes God, grieves good men, hardens bad men, and gives a just offence to all men. Besides, it renders such most infamous while they live, most hopeless in Death, and most miserable at Judgment. How will such be able to look that God, that Church, and those Souls in the Face then, whom they robbed, devoured, sold, and were perfidious to on Earth.

It was usual when any thing was devoted to Divine uses, to do it with a Curse, yea with many dreadful Curses against all that should presume, to take away, or Alienate any part of it to private uses; But if the Curses of Mortal Men take not hold, the Curse of God will, and he hath cursed all, be they never so many and great, that Rob him of Tithes and Offerings, *Mal. 3. 9. Ye are cursed with a curse, for ye have robbed me, even this whole Nation.* God hath in all ages punished this sin with curse upon curse, in so much that if search be made into the Chronicles, and Histories of any age, there will not be found one Church-Robber that hath prospered to the fourth Generation, a just Nemesis hath pursued overtaken and destroyed them, before they have proceeded so far, that which the Fathers have raked together by Simony and Sacrilege, the Children have profusely scattered abroad: and as the Fathers Damned their Souls to get an Estate, so the Children Damn their Souls in spending it. God hath put all Sacrilegious persons together; and under the Emblem of a Flying Roll, hath sent forth Divine Vengeance like a Hue and Cry to pursue, apprehend and destroy them, *Zech. 5. 34. The Curse is revealed from Heaven, and hangs over their guilty heads as a Storm, and who knows how*

how soon it may be poured upon them ? and who can express their sad condition when it is ? In vain then will such wish they had never been born, too late will they Petition Mountains and Rocks (which can neither hear nor help them) *to fall on them, and bide them from the face of him, that sits on the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, Rev. 6. 16.* how hot and heavy is that wrath, which makes them willing to be crushed in pieces, or turn'd to nothing rather than abide it ?

To conclude this unpleasant discourse, let all Sacrilegious persons, who take away what they can from the Church, whether they be Impropiators, Patrons or Parishioners, take the advice given by God himself to their Predecessours, *Hag. 1. 5, 7. Now therefore thus saith the Lord of Hosts, consider your ways;* If you have not sinned away the power of consideration, and are past feeling, Sequester your selves from all that hinders, and in the fear of God, get alone, withdraw into some secret place free from company and disturbance, and there consider, 1. What Sacrilege is. 2. Who first introduced it, and still carries it on. 3. The greatness of the sin, how it is an Invasion of God himself, a breach both of the first and second Table, it bespeaks persons Graceless, void of the Fear and Love of God, and most unfit for any place of trust in Families, Church or State, it were a vain thing for the nearest Relations on Earth, to expect truth and fidelity from such as are false to God and their own Souls ; How can he be true to any thing or person on Earth that is false to God and his own Soul ? There are some that pretend extraordinary Loyalty to their King, but he that Robs God would not scruple to Rob his King if he durst. 4. The destructive nature of this sin both in its self, and in its effects. 5. The great danger of continuing in this sin, which is so comprehensive, and against which so many Curses are denounced, such considerations may dispose guilty Persons to Repentance, which consists in four things. 1. A Broken Heart. 2. A Confessing Tongue. 3. A Restoring Hand. 4. A Reformed Life. If Consideration ends in Humiliation, and that in Confession, and that in Restitution, and that in Reformation, there is no fear of a gracious Pardon. And tho' such Repentance is difficult, (especially for such persons) yet it's absolutely necessary, and without it no hopes of Pardon, *Luk. 13. 3. Be not deceived God is not mocked, Gal. 6. 7. God is so Knowing, none can hide any thing from him, He is so Wise, that none can beguile him, He is so Wealthy none can Bribe him, so Just that none can contradict him, and so Powerful none can resist him. Whatsoever a man soweth that shall be Reap:* Every action of a Mans Life is as seed, and hath a Seminal Vertue in it, and at Harvest he shall Reap a Crop, he that hath Sown the Seeds of Simony and Sacrilege, shall Reap the Curses and Punishments due to such sins, *Gal. 6. 8.*

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I. **T**He Text (which may be called an Apostolical Canon) opened.
 2. The Doctrinal conclusions drawn from it, and proved three ways.

3. The true notion of an offence stated; the several words used in the holy Scripture to signify an offence examined; and their true meaning discovered.

4. The most famous Schoolmans description of an offence examined, and found too narrow to express the true nature of an offence.

5. Another description given, wherein the defect is supplied.

II. What it is to give an offence, with a threefold distinction made.

1. Some offences are both given and taken, and these are sins both in the giver and taker, but greater in the giver.

2. Some are given, but not taken, and there the sin rests only in the giver.

3. Some are taken, not given, and there the sin rests only in the taker.

4. Some Instances given of all these.

III. Wherein a Minister is liable above others to give offence, which he should carefully avoid, in ten particulars.

1. At his entrance upon the Ministry, when 1. He is not rightly qualified for it. 2. Nor rightly called to it. 3. Nor rightly settled in it; all these opened, and his qualifications reduced to four heads. 1. A rational Head. 2. A learned Tongue. 3. A gracious Heart. 4. A holy Life. His Call is twofold, one from Heaven, the other on Earth, and both these may and ought to be proved; and he that cannot prove his Call is an Impostor; his Settlement or Personal Residence must be without Simony, of which something (but not half enough) is spoken.

2. By the negligent, careless, or gross omission of the manifest duties of his Calling.

3. When he performs his Office with such a rude irreverence, light indecency, or such manifest unsuitable unworthiness as betrays the holy things, wherein he ministers to scorn and contempt.

4. By depressing the honour of Preaching, and making it stoop to other parts of Gods Worship, on purpose to undermine his Authority. And this is done four ways. 1. By questioning whether it be a Worship of God properly so called. 2. By crying up the Lyurgy (or Common-Prayer in opposition to it. 3. By declaring that the bare reading of holy Scripture is the best Preaching. 4. By insinuating that (if there must be other Preaching) the Homilies of our Church set out by Authority, are the only Sermons; All these examined and brought to a pleasant Concord.

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5. By sowing and cherishing the seeds of Schism, Discord and Separation.
6. By the abuse of his Christian Liberty; two places of Scripture opened.
7. By his words of private conversation, and what those words are.
8. By the evil Example of his leud and loose life.
9. When the matter of his Doctrine is not Scripture proof, but false and Heretical, broaching, or reviving damnable and condemned Heresies; this is proved by four Arguments to be the most dangerous offence that any Minister can give.
10. When he doth not officiate in such a manner as he ought.
The whole of all is applied.
 1. To the Ministers of the first Order, the Fathers and Governours of our Church.
 2. An humble Address made to such, and three Considerations to enforce it.
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 3. A few words to the People, lamenting their general forwardness to censure all Ministers, for the faults of some few, and to wrest their faults upon the Ministry it self.
 2. The great danger of this sin, and that it proceeds from the want of 1. Charity, 2. Pity, 3. Honesty.
 3. Directions how People ought to treat their Ministers, in six particulars.
 4. A Request made to People by their Ministers, and the highest Testimony they desire to have of their Ministers Sincerity, and how great a sin it is to slight such.
 5. A general Exhortation given to Ministers and People of all Persuasions, that they would Preach and Hear Gospel Charity, Unity and Concord, and yield Obedience to plain and known Truths, and submit to Gospel Discipline.
 6. The whole is concluded with a short Discourse about Simony and Sacrilege, with the best Advice that can be given to such as are guilty of such hateful sins.

O blessed Father, suffer not the Places where thou hast recorded thy Name to be ruined! O blessed Son, shew thy wonted Zeal to thy Fathers House! O blessed Spirit, quicken those in Authority to cure or cut off evil doers from the House of the Lord. Amen.

F I N I S.